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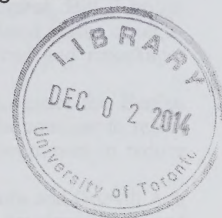
First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**



Thursday 27 November 2014

Jeudi 27 novembre 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 November 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 novembre 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 26, 2014, on the motion for time allocation of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 7, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When this item of business was last debated, the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry had finished his speech. Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise today, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to add my voice to the debate on time allocation on Bill 7, the bill that is optimistically called by the Liberals the Better Business Climate Act. I was looking forward to participating in the debate on the contents of the bill itself, but the government has chosen to introduce a closure motion to cut off debate and move the bill quickly to committee so that it can be passed.

Speaker, it will come as no surprise to members of this Legislature that my New Democratic colleagues and I are opposed to the time allocation motion. We are opposed on philosophical grounds, because closure stifles democracy; it silences the voices of the 13 million Ontarians who are represented by MPPs in this chamber from all three political parties.

Closure is a blunt instrument. If used, it must be used sparingly and only in circumstances that warrant its use. But the government has not put forward any compelling rationale for the need to move this bill through. They have not offered anything to back up the urgency of this legislation. They have not presented any kind of argument that justifies shutting down debate; that says there is a higher public policy good that will be achieved if this bill is passed now, something so important that it is okay to override the right of MPPs to speak on behalf of their

communities, to talk about what this legislation will mean to the people we represent. That's because the government knows that there is nothing in this legislation that allows them to make this claim. Despite its very hopeful title, it is an innocuous PR exercise that contributes almost nothing to getting our economy moving, to creating good jobs and to addressing the real challenges people face.

Like so many other bills we have seen since the election of this Liberal majority government, Bill 7 brings together two different and barely related pieces of legislation that were previously introduced and repackages them under a shiny new title.

Schedule 1 of Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, requires the minister to report annually on actions taken by the government to reduce regulatory burdens.

Schedule 2, the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, allows the minister to create plans to develop clusters and to consult with those interested in the cluster before the plans are finalized.

Looking at the first part of the bill, what's important to point out is that there is nothing in schedule 1 that actually contributes to reducing red tape, defined as the statutory, regulatory, procedural, administrative or other requirements that create costs to business in terms of money, time or resources, and unnecessarily inhibit productivity, job creation and innovation.

Bill 7 only commits the government to publish an annual report on what the government has done, if anything, to reduce regulatory burdens. While it clearly makes the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure responsible for reporting on how the government is reducing burdens, it is silent on the process that decides what constitutes a burden and which burdens should be reduced.

New Democrats fully support streamlining regulatory processes to make it easier for entrepreneurs to start up new businesses and to make it easier for established businesses to grow and expand. But we also believe that strong regulatory frameworks are critical in areas like environmental protection, for example, and worker health and safety, because there may be environmental regulations or health and safety regulations that are perceived by some businesses as burdensome, but they are absolutely critical to ensure clean air and clean water and to protect worker safety.

New Democrats have a concern that Bill 7 could implicitly condone the elimination of regulatory protections that are essential to safeguard the public interest, all in the

name of cutting red tape. That said, however, we certainly agree with the importance of removing unnecessary regulatory burdens for Ontario businesses, particularly when it comes to bringing those who have been shut out of the labour market back into the economy by giving them equal opportunities to start up and operate businesses.

Right now, the OECD is leading a study on inclusive entrepreneurship, to identify the policies and best practices that contribute to the social inclusion of youth, women, seniors, newcomers, visible minorities, people with disabilities, indigenous people and other groups who are disadvantaged and underrepresented in business creation and self-employment.

There is a terrific report that came out of that study just last year, called *The Missing Entrepreneurs: Policies for Inclusive Entrepreneurship in Europe*, which identifies some specific regulatory barriers that impact entrepreneurship and self-employment among disadvantaged and underrepresented groups and prevent access to key resources. These include tax, family and social policies that tacitly encourage traditional roles for women; age rules for participation in business activity and the complexity of regulations that are difficult for young people to navigate; retirement policies that create disincentives for seniors to earn additional income; foreign credential recognition and Canadian experience requirements that create barriers for immigrants to get into the economy; and social policies that put a cap on self-employment earnings for people with disabilities who are receiving disability benefits.

So, if and when the government takes steps to reduce the regulatory burden and when it presents its report on the steps that were taken, New Democrats will be looking at whether the barriers that prevent young people, immigrants, people with disabilities, First Nations and other disadvantaged groups from starting their own businesses are being addressed and whether the reduction of red tape is facilitating inclusive entrepreneurship for all potential business owners in this province.

It's also important to point out that the government doesn't even need Bill 7 in order to change unnecessary regulations. It could go ahead and do that today. It certainly doesn't need legislation in order to publish a report about what it is doing to change unnecessary regulations. If the government was serious about creating a better business climate, then it would do much more than publish a report once a year.

0910

I want to share with this House some of the barriers to self-employment and business ownership that were identified in my community just last month, when the London Small Business Centre reported on its entrepreneurship climate survey that was conducted in Middlesex, Elgin, Oxford and Lambton. About 1,500 people were interviewed by telephone and were classified according to whether they owned or had owned a small business or were seriously considering starting their own business. About 15% said that they currently owned a small busi-

ness; 14% used to own a small business; and 12% intended to start a small business.

When asked about barriers to business ownership, by far the most significant barrier for all respondents was insufficient financial resources, especially for those who were intending to start a business.

Other barriers that hold people back from business ownership are fear of failure and lack of a solid business plan, as well as insufficient knowledge or skills in the selected business, and family commitments. This suggests that access to funding, mentorship programs, tailored post-secondary education and training programs, and affordable child care or adult day programs for seniors are some of the critical elements that are necessary to improve the business climate in this province and enable businesses to thrive.

I now want to turn to schedule 2 of the bill, which deals with clusters, that is, geographically interconnected firms and supporting institutions within a particular industry sector. There is an emerging policy consensus about the effectiveness of clusters in stimulating job creation, entrepreneurship and innovation, so it's great to see that this government is talking about cluster strategies. The problem is that this legislation won't do a thing to facilitate cluster development in Ontario. There is no regulatory framework in Bill 7, no dollars to support cluster initiatives, no incentives to bring firms together in a cluster strategy and no resources to spark cluster innovation through regional networking.

When the NDP government launched its Sector Partnership Fund back in 1992, it provided funding of up to \$500,000 per sector to support the formation of a sector strategy.

Even the PC government recognized the importance of financial support and provided up to \$200,000 for the development of regional biotechnology cluster plans in 2002.

Some of the leading-edge research coming out of the US on clusters, from the Brookings Institution and elsewhere, emphasizes the importance of planning grants to support cluster development, grants that can fund feasibility studies by regional consortia like the RICs, or industry collaborations or post-secondary institutions. But what does this Liberal government include in their cluster initiative? Nothing, not a cent, which makes one wonder why they even bothered with this legislation if they weren't prepared to commit resources toward the development of cluster plans.

In my community, in London, where almost 30,000 jobs have been lost since 2008, there is also a concern about whether cluster strategies can address the needs of those who have been left behind by the collapse of the manufacturing sector and the transition to a new economy. Clusters tend to be associated with high-skill, high-wage jobs in fields like biotech and ICT, which often bypass economically and socially disadvantaged groups who are struggling just to put food on the table. As a result, cluster strategies have been critiqued for skewing resources to those who are already better off instead of

supporting just and equitable economic development for all.

But similar to the new focus on inclusive entrepreneurship that I mentioned earlier, there is also growing interest in inclusive cluster development; in particular, cluster development that meets the triple bottom line of increased competitiveness, economic opportunity for unemployed and disadvantaged workers, and environmental sustainability. To be inclusive, efforts must be made during the cluster selection phase to bring in people, places and firms that may be outside the economic mainstream. And clusters must be identified and nurtured across all regions of this province, not just in the established hot spots.

This is not to say that clusters can be artificially created where they do not authentically exist. There has to be evidence of co-located and interconnected firms working with the same supporting organizations. For example, in my community in London, an exciting digital creative cluster has taken shape, supported by local economic development efforts: Fanshawe College and Western University, TechAlliance and some internationally recognized anchor firms. Incubator space is available downtown at Hacker Studios, Inner Geek Studios and Un-London as well as at the MVP Lab at Western Research Parks. The Southwestern Ontario Angel Group is ready to provide that needed early-stage investment.

The cluster now employs about 8,000 people but could employ many more. A cluster plan, with funding attached, could help that digital creative cluster grow and expand, by supporting things like training, R&D, technology transfer and adoption, and marketing.

To ensure equitable access to economic opportunity, cluster strategies must involve all the partners within the local region, including governments, secondary and post-secondary education, training, economic development, labour and civic organizations. They must include a specific focus on the workforce development needs of the industry within the local labour market.

Absolutely essential to identifying workforce development needs is data—reliable, timely and granular data, which continues to be a gaping hole in our knowledge of local labour markets. In fact, cluster experts emphasize that each phase of cluster development, from the initial identification of clusters to the range of policy interventions to the measurement of cluster effectiveness, must be grounded in rigorous, empirical evidence and analysis. This is another area where the government could show leadership: by funding workforce planning boards to develop robust data collection and sharing capacities to inform cluster development strategies.

In my community, the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board has operated on a shoestring budget to develop an amazing local resource called *worktrends.ca*, which offers one-stop access to rich information about the local labour market. As more and more community partners recognize that our local and regional prosperity depends on cross-sector collaboration and information sharing, this tool is only beginning to

scratch the surface of its full potential. It is a model that could and should be replicated in communities across the province, a model that would be even more powerful if the government dedicated real resources to its continued enhancement and if the government allocated resources to enable other local training boards to implement similar initiatives.

Worktrends.ca offers an important asset to assist in identifying areas of true competitive advantage within the region, to assist in identifying the existing skills that are already available in our local labour market, and also to identify the talent pool that is being generated by our local post-secondary institutions.

I want to close with a word of warning from the cluster experts I mentioned earlier. Cluster policy cannot be top-down. It must be driven locally. It must flow from the on-the-ground networks, experiences and resources that are already in place. It must leverage the work that is already being done by local actors, like the London Economic Development Corp. in my community, which has identified the key clusters that are ready for provincial innovation support, like food and beverage processing, which employs over 6,000 people in the London area; life sciences, which employs over 21,000 people; advanced manufacturing, with a focus on automotive, clean tech and defence, which employs over 30,000 people; in addition to the digital creative cluster that I talked about earlier.

The notion described in Bill 7 of the minister deciding to prepare a cluster plan and then consulting with persons or entities with an interest in the cluster, is hugely problematic, and it flies in the face of best practice and research from around the world.

0920

In closing, Speaker, New Democrats will be opposing the time allocation motion. We think that there should be much greater opportunity for MPPs on all sides of this House to talk about this bill, to talk about what this legislation means to the people we represent, and what it brings or doesn't bring to our community and our local efforts to get our economies moving.

However, we will be supporting the bill, but not because we think that it will do anything, really, to improve the business climate in Ontario, despite its very eloquent, optimistic and hopeful title, the Better Business Climate Act. We think it basically does nothing. It is an innocuous PR exercise that really doesn't contribute anything to getting the economy moving, and it's really not worth opposing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 10. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote will be deferred to after question period.

Vote deferred.

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT (MAKING
ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFER), 2014
LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE TRANSPORT (ACCROÎTRE LA
SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE EN ONTARIO)

Mr. Del Duca moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Del Duca.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a real honour for me to have the opportunity to stand in the House today and to deliver remarks with respect to the second reading debate on this particular bill, which, in fact, is the first opportunity that I've had to introduce a bill since becoming Ontario's Minister of Transportation.

This is a very important piece of legislation, as all are, of course, that come before this chamber for discussion and debate, but this one in particular is, as it is largely aimed at working very hard to make sure that Ontario's roads remain very, very safe.

To that point, for the past 13 years, this province's roads have placed amongst the highest for safety in North America, ranking on a regular basis either first or second. This consistent success, of course, is a result of our tough laws, our strong enforcement and the work of our many dedicated road safety partners across Ontario.

We could not have achieved this remarkable record without the Ontario Provincial Police and municipal police services who enforce our laws that, of course, ultimately help keep our roads safe.

But I think we also need to acknowledge the work of hundreds of individuals and organizations that work tirelessly to promote and improve road safety in Ontario, organizations like the CAA, Parachute Canada, the Ontario Safety League and Share the Road Cycling Coalition. Many of these partners joined us on the day on which we launched to the media the announcement regarding this particular legislation. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for being there that day and for being such steadfast and strong supporters of this legislation.

Our partners work in areas like cycling, impaired driving, distracted driving, injury prevention, pedestrian safety, trucking and countless others to help raise awareness, advocate for change and save lives in our province.

Despite Ontario's excellent road safety record, there is always more that we can do to improve the situation,

because on average, one person is killed on our roads every 18 hours, and one person is injured every 8.1 minutes. So we will always strive to do more to improve the situation. That's why we continue to look for new and effective ways to save lives by keeping all Ontarians safe on our roads.

Last month, we introduced legislation here in this Legislature that, if passed, will help reduce collisions, injuries and fatalities on our roads and highways. It would also assist municipalities with respect to the collection of unpaid Provincial Offences Act fines and improve the safety of all road users, something that municipalities across Ontario have been calling for, for some time.

This bill is actually the result of collaboration among many members of this Legislature, including two of my predecessors who served in the past as Ministers of Transportation: our current minister responsible for the environment and climate change, Glen Murray, and our current Minister of Energy, Bob Chiarelli.

It also builds on four different private members' bills that have helped lay the groundwork for several of the road safety issues that we need to address. For example, my colleague the member from Scarborough—Rouge River has done important work on discouraging distracted driving in our province. I want to acknowledge, of course, the work of the newly elected member from Burlington, who prior to coming to this Legislature as an MPP and certainly since arriving in this Legislature has been a tireless advocate in the cycling community, working with them and working with us to encourage us to do more in this particular regard.

Of course, I want to acknowledge and thank both of my parliamentary assistants, the member from Cambridge and the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, for being strong supporters of this legislation and for helping us bring it to the fore at this point and time.

This bill is truly the result of a collaboration of many members in this House. It is a bill for all Ontarians, and it belongs to everyone in this Legislature. The Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act addresses many of the issues that affect the safety and well-being of everyone who uses our roads. Keeping our roads safe for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians is a top priority for this government.

Driving in the province of Ontario is a privilege; it's not a right. If this legislation passes, it would continue our strong legacy of actions to address the growing problem of distracted driving. As you know, Speaker, it is currently illegal for drivers to talk, type, text, dial or email using hand held cellphones and other hand held communications devices and entertainment devices. The evidence speaks for itself: A driver who uses a cellphone is four times more likely to be in a crash than drivers who are focused on the road. That's why safe driving requires undivided attention. Drivers need to focus on the task at hand, keeping their eyes on the road, paying attention to the conditions of the road and keeping their hands on the wheel.

While we have seen success with our distracted driving law and public education efforts, distracted driving

continues to be a growing problem on the province's roads. If current collision trends continue, fatalities from distracted driving may exceed those from drinking and driving by 2016. That's why we have been working on ways to discourage distracted driving and reduce those collisions, injuries and fatalities resulting from this practice.

The Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act would increase fines for distracted driving from a current range of \$60 to \$500, upward to a range of \$300 to \$1,000. This would become one of the highest fine ranges in Canada for distracted driving, illustrating Ontario's leadership in penalizing those who drive distracted. Additionally, we are proposing complementary regulatory changes that would apply three demerit points and add a distracted driving prohibition to the existing graduated licensing system's driver's licence conditions. These proposed changes send a clear message to all road users that distractions while driving are dangerous and can mean the difference between life and death.

If passed, this legislation and proposed regulatory changes would also strengthen our existing impaired driving laws to make our roads even safer. In 2012, Ontario had the lowest impaired driving offence rate in Canada. This is a remarkable achievement, but there is more that we need to do, more that we can do, to address impaired driving in our province.

We are proposing to require more drivers who are repeatedly caught drinking and driving to complete an intensive alcohol education program. This would be followed by a treatment and ignition interlock monitoring program if they continue to repeat this dangerous behaviour. The Reduced Suspension with Ignition Interlock Conduct Review Program would also be extended to repeat offenders. Research proves that ignition interlock devices are effective at preventing drinking and driving. That's why we would extend the program to reduce the risk posed by repeat drinking drivers by monitoring their driving behaviour.

This legislation would also expand existing alcohol-impaired sanctions to drivers who are impaired by drugs. Recent statistics show that over 45% of drivers killed had been using drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol. These changes in particular will help enforce the message from industry players and partners such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Arrive Alive Drive Sober, who work hard to emphasize the dangers associated with driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

0930

The Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act would also be another step in strengthening the identification of medically unfit drivers. Ontario's mandatory reporting program for physicians is a key method for identifying individuals of any age with a medical condition that may make it unsafe for them to drive. This bill would enable the Ministry of Transportation to accept reports from a broader range of qualified health care practitioners in the future, and it would assist in clarifying mandatory reporting requirements according to standards developed in co-oper-

ation with the medical community. These changes would help keep our medical review program among the most stringent in North America and serve to help quickly remove unsafe drivers from our roads.

Ontario municipalities have called on the province to assist in providing more tools to collect defaulted Provincial Offences Act fines. If passed, this bill represents a major step forward in helping our municipal partners collect the money that is owed to them. In the future, any municipality that chooses to use this fine collection tool will be able to direct the Ministry of Transportation to not only suspend their driver's licence, but also deny all vehicle plates registered to an individual who has defaulted on their POA fines. This bill would also improve municipalities' ability to charge and prosecute out-of-province owners of vehicles involved in red-light camera and fail-to-stop for school bus offences in Ontario.

We are also proposing to improve the safety of tow truck drivers in our province. Tow truck drivers can face significant risks when they help motorists on the roadside of busy highways. If passed, motorists would be required to slow down and, if safe to do so, move over—as is the case with police officers and other emergency responders—when they approach stopped tow trucks with flashing yellow lights on the side of the road. This measure would help ensure drivers exercise greater caution around stopped tow trucks providing help to motorists, preventing needless collisions and saving lives.

Active transportation such as cycling and walking is the healthiest, least expensive solution to congestion. A growing number of Ontarians are choosing cycling as a way to get around. In my opening remarks in debate here this morning, I referenced the great work that the member from Burlington has done both prior to arriving in this Legislature and certainly since being here. But I also want to acknowledge again the current Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for his leadership, in particular on this file, while he served as Minister of Transportation.

That's why last year we released #CycleON, Ontario's 20-year strategy to become the most cycling-friendly jurisdiction in North America. If passed, this legislation would build on that strategy to give cyclists more ways to travel and improve their safety on our roads and highways. This act would introduce several measures to further help motorists and cyclists share the road safely, which is so crucial, increasing fines for drivers for dooring cyclists from a range of \$60 to \$500, upwards to a range of \$300 to \$1,000 and, going forward, raising the demerit points from two to three.

Where practical, motorists would be required to keep a minimum distance of one metre between their vehicles and cyclists when passing. These measures will help cyclists stay safe when they travel near other vehicles on our roads and highways. This legislation would also help ensure that cyclists are visible by allowing the use of flashing red lights on bicycles and increasing fines for not using required bicycle lights and reflectors. We propose to promote safer opportunities for cycling by allowing

cycling on paved shoulders of unrestricted provincial highways. This would improve safety for both cyclists and motorists by allowing cyclists to keep out of the flow of high-speed traffic.

This legislation would also support cycling in urban areas by allowing municipalities to create contra-flow bike lanes. These measures would provide more direct routes and connectivity for cyclists, giving cyclists more choices regarding how and where to travel. Ontario is committed to supporting active, safe and sustainable transportation across the province, and that's why we are proposing measures to support cycling throughout Ontario and, again, encourage safe practices among both cyclists and motorists.

The Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act would also help pedestrians stay safe in our communities. Overall, the number of pedestrians killed in Ontario has declined significantly in the past 25 years. That is good news, but as I said at the outset, our work in this regard is never done, as it shouldn't be. There is always room to improve. But pedestrians still represent approximately one in five motor-vehicle-related fatalities; 46% of those fatalities occurred at intersections.

In response to the coroner's office recommendations and requests from municipalities, if passed, this bill would require drivers to yield the whole roadway to pedestrians at school crossings and pedestrian crossovers, and it would also support municipal requests for new pedestrian crossing devices.

This bill also responds to industry requests for modifications to the technical rules governing allowable B-train double tractor-trailer combination lengths. With work alongside important industry partners, such as the Ontario Trucking Association and the Private Motor Truck Council of Canada, Ontario will be extending allowance to move from B-train double trailer combinations to extend up to 27.5 metres from the current 25-metre rule. These changes will allow carriers to use longer tractors with their existing trailers and will accommodate for such things as new technology required to meet air quality and greenhouse gas emission mandates and to include more comfortable sleeper berths for drivers on long-haul operations.

This legislation also proposes a change that will remove a redundant consultation process. Annual toll rate increases regarding the Highway 407 east toll rates will be based on Ontario's consumer price index. For a toll adjustment either above or below the consumer price index increase, a regulation would be required, and the public would be able to provide input through the regulatory registry.

With respect to our motor vehicle inspection stations, this legislation would modernize the program to protect consumers and improve the standards of this important program. The system we now have was established in the 1970s, and we know that the program can be improved. We need to improve the way vehicles are inspected to make sure that unsafe vehicles are not being fraudulently inspected and rebuilt and finding their way back on to

Ontario's roads. Currently, ministry-licensed inspection stations and mechanics that fail to follow our standards can often continue their business for a lengthy period after they have been identified as a problem. These are often businesses and individuals who are knowingly endangering lives by issuing fraudulent inspection certificates or illegally repairing damaged vehicles.

If passed, this legislation would replace the current licences with performance contracts between inspection stations and the Ministry of Transportation and secure a third party contract administrator to oversee the program. We anticipate that these new contracts would include many remedies to allow quick and effective action against inspection stations that don't meet our standards.

This legislation would also transfer regulation-making authority for the program to the Minister of Transportation, and the ministry would be authorized to set standards by ministry directive. This would help change inspection standards more quickly to keep them up to date with modern advances in technology.

This legislation would also improve the Mandatory Vehicle Branding Program to prevent vehicle fraud and protect consumers who buy used vehicles. Under this program, vehicles that have been written off because of a collision or a flood are branded by the ministry as either salvageable or irreparable. Vehicle owners can make a written appeal to challenge the accuracy of their vehicle's brand. Currently, many requests are submitted by individuals who have knowingly purchased an irreparable or a salvage vehicle and appeal the brand based on fraudulent motives.

0940

If passed, only the person who owned a vehicle at the time it was damaged and reported it to the ministry would be allowed to appeal its brand. This would prevent appeals by those looking to make a profit by illegally rebuilding vehicles or selling damaged vehicles to the unsuspecting public. The ministry would also be permitted to appoint a third party administrator to review and decide branding appeals.

The vital changes to motor vehicle inspection and the Mandatory Vehicle Branding Program proposed in this bill would protect consumers from unscrupulous parties and keep unsafe vehicles off our roads.

These changes, along with numerous others that we're proposing going forward, recognize that unsafe drivers and vehicles have no place on Ontario's roads. All road users need to feel safe and need to be safe on our roads and highways, no matter how they choose to travel.

We have had great success in keeping our roads safe, thanks to our legacy of tough laws, our strong enforcement and those partnerships that I talked about at the outset of my remarks this morning. Ontario is a North American leader with respect to road safety, and these new measures are intended to build on that legacy, to build on that track record and to improve it. The measures that we are debating here today truly reflect the achievements of our colleagues, our enforcement officers and our many road safety partners with respect to advocating for safer roads in our province.

Speaker, I don't mind saying in discussion and debate this morning that over the last number of weeks since this bill was first made public, since it was first introduced, in my opportunity to travel not only in my own community of Vaughan and across York region and around the greater Toronto area and beyond across this province, there is a great deal of anticipation in many circles with respect to this particular legislation. There is an awareness, I would say, that this is, as I said at the outset, a consolidation, in many respects, of previous legislation that had been introduced, both government bills—the former Bill 173 and the former Bill 34—and also a number of initiatives taken up by private members through private members' business in this place over the last number of years.

Certainly, in my two years in this Legislature as an MPP for Vaughan, I've seen these issues be discussed and debated in our caucus and, I'm sure, in opposition caucuses as well. There is a great deal of anticipation and, dare I say, excitement at the idea that we are moving forward in a determined way, in a methodical way, with government legislation that will consolidate a number of those measures brought forward previously in this place and build on that legacy and that record that we have here in the province of Ontario of ensuring that our roads and highways are either ranked first or second—consistently, for over a decade now—for road safety in North America. It's a record to be very proud of.

Certainly, for the Ministry of Transportation, our government, my predecessors in this particular ministry, all of the extraordinary public servants who work at the Ministry of Transportation, this is part of their life's work. We see evidence of the improvements, we see evidence of the achievements, with respect to that consistent first or second ranking that I talked about a second ago.

But we do have to do more. I've discussed today, measures with respect to reducing distracted driving. I've talked about the need for taking strong action regarding repeat offenders with respect to alcohol-impaired driving, bringing in sanctions for drug-impaired driving for the first time, bringing Ontario into alignment with what occurs in many other jurisdictions across this country. These are all steps that our government is taking at this particular point in time because, while the record is very strong, while the foundation is something for us to be very proud of, the work must continue.

Often, when I've had the chance to speak with my own constituents or others about the need for this kind of legislation, I've received a ton of positive feedback, and, by the way, Speaker, not just from people alongside me in this particular caucus but from members of the opposition, in comments made at committee, stuff that I've heard in the hallways as we have informal chats about this. There is, I know, a great degree of support for the general thrust of that which underpins this particular legislation.

That's why, over the course of the rest of the debate at second reading and beyond, and as we get into committee, I do look forward to the discussion; I do look for-

ward to the questions; I do look forward to the analysis. I'm a confident person, an optimistic person by nature, Speaker, and I'm optimistic and I'm confident that, working together, all three parties, all three caucuses in this Legislature, can find a way to move this forward.

It is important, and I say that not just as the MPP for Vaughan and not just as the Minister of Transportation. I say that as the father of two young children, a seven-year-old and a three-year-old. I think it's important for all of us, those of us who currently use our roads and highways, whether we're drivers, we're cyclists, we're pedestrians, we're passengers in vehicles; whether we do our travel because it's part of our business, because there's a commercial aspect to it or whether we do it to commute—it's extremely important that we never rest on our laurels, that we never step back and say, "It's okay; we've done enough for the last 13 years," that we continue to work with our partners, that we continue to embrace new technologies where they're available, that we continue to provide appropriate sanctions for repeated behaviours that are not acceptable on our roads, and that we always strive for excellence with respect to achieving and maintaining a road safety record that is something that should be admired, something that's very, very important to me, and I know it's very important to members on all sides of this House.

Again, I do want to say to everybody, let's have the debate. We will have the debate. We should have the debate and discussion. I know there will be lots of interest. I know, certainly, there's interest from a number of my colleagues on this side of the House who are very, very happy to know that we have consolidated some pre-existing legislation, or previously introduced legislation.

I mentioned earlier it's not just members of the governing caucus who brought forward private members' business or private members' initiatives in this regard. Members of the opposition have in the past as well, which I think bodes well for that notion that we can work together, that we can produce a positive result, that we can work hard to maintain that status that we have as a North American leader for road safety. I do look forward to the discussion.

I know that a number of organizations, even in my own community, have come to see me specifically about the provisions that will help support active transportation, the cycling components and a number of the other items that are in this bill. It's interesting for me to hear from those who, on a regular basis, do participate, in some cases for leisure, in some cases for recreation, and in some cases, also, again, for work-related reasons in what I'll call the world of cycling.

It's extraordinary for me to have heard first-hand from individuals in York region who have made it their passion, who have made it their mission, to improve cycling infrastructure and active transportation infrastructure in an area like York region; to hear their stories first-hand about the challenges that both cyclists and motorists face on a regular basis because some of the rules, perhaps, are a bit unclear; perhaps the infrastructure hasn't been able to keep pace with the expansion of active transportation.

That's why, under the leadership of my predecessor at the Ministry of Transportation, the current Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and because of the extraordinary advocacy of the member from Burlington and her organization, the organization with which she has been associated, Share the Road, and so much other work that has been brought to bear on this, we have moved forward with the cycling strategy that I referenced in my remarks this morning. It's why we've included provisions, ground-breaking provisions in many respects, in Bill 31 to make sure that motorists, cyclists and all others participating and using our roads can share the space, can travel safely, can move, can have that sense that there is an overarching structure or regime of regulations and rules.

But at the same time, part and parcel of this is the education, to make sure that we are constantly raising public awareness so that motorists, particularly younger drivers as they're learning, as they're getting their licences, as they're embarking on becoming drivers for the rest of their lives—that there's an understanding of what it means to share the road.

I mentioned in my remarks this morning that all forms of active transportation are amongst the easiest and amongst the least expensive ways to improve congestion. We've seen our government take a very strong leadership role in terms of advancing that mission, in terms of advancing that cause. Here in Bill 31, we have an additional step forward, significant progress that's going to be made.

There are lots of other elements of this bill relating to our school bus system in the province of Ontario and the particular colours that apply to school buses.

I talked about some of the changes that we've made, or that we propose to make, with respect to what will take place on Highway 407 east, an extraordinary piece of crucial infrastructure that will help serve people from the GTA all the way through Durham out to, eventually, with phase 2, people living out by the Peterborough area and that part of our wonderful province.

This is a big bill. There are, as I like to say in the Ministry of Transportation, always lots of moving parts, and this bill is no exception. There are lots of moving parts in this legislation, each one very important.

We talked about the ability that we're going to extend to our municipalities with respect to being able to collect outstanding Provincial Offences Act fines. That has consistently been an issue that's raised, I'm sure with all members on all sides of this House, by our municipal partners. I heard about it loud and clear this past summer when I was privileged to attend the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference. It was one of the questions that came from the floor and I heard about it in one-on-one delegation meetings that I had.

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There was a broad recognition from our municipal partners that we had made an attempt, with Bill 34 previously, to accomplish the outcome that they were looking for. They were calling on us—they have been calling on us consistently to reintroduce this legislation, and here

we are with Bill 31, taking these steps to respond to their very appropriate request for additional assistance to collect these unpaid fines.

Speaker, there are lots of moving parts in this legislation. It is a big bill. It has some very important objectives attached to it. I think the debate here today, and the debate for the rest of the time that's going to be apportioned for this particular bill, will be fascinating for me and the rest of our team to listen to. I do look forward to working with everybody on this one—very, very important.

Again, I want to close by thanking all of my predecessors, all of my caucus colleagues, members from the other side of the House, but in particular, our road safety partners, for the extraordinary work that they do.

With that, I will take my seat and thank you, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to talk about Bill 31 today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Transportation on his opening speech on the debate on Bill 31, and compliment him on his speech. It was a fine one, and we appreciated his overview of the bill.

I hope, though, in his response to questions and comments, that he will acknowledge that it was the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka who brought forward a number of private member's bills calling attention to the need to pave the shoulders of Ontario's highways and also to allow for an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act to allow bicycles to be used on the shoulders. I gather that's a component of Bill 31 that he has adopted as government policy. That's just like the bill being passed into law. So I congratulate the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, and I would hope that the minister will be big enough to do the same.

He mentioned that he attended the AMO conference, just as he closed his speech. Certainly, I've heard from municipalities in my riding in particular of a number of issues with respect to transportation and the lack of funding through the Connecting Link Program, which, Mr. Speaker, as you know, was a provincial-municipal partnership, I think, that goes back to George Howard Ferguson's days in 1927. It's one of the longest provincial programs and joint programs with municipalities. Unfortunately, a couple of years ago, not this minister but another Minister of Transportation arbitrarily cancelled that program. There are a significant number of projects in my riding and across the province that need the funding that used to exist under Connecting Link, and I would hope that he would give consideration to that issue.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't remind the minister of the need to put the Highway 6 Morriston bypass project on the ministry's five-year plan. He indicated before that the plan is going to be coming out soon. It's called the southern highways program. I would encourage the minister to announce, in his response, that he has in fact listened to the people of our area, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Chair of Cabinet and others who have spoken out in support—

the Premier, I think, has spoken out in support of the project too. We would look forward to his announcement today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The government is notorious these days for putting all kinds of stuff into bills and giving them great titles so that it sounds like we're doing something that is oh so progressive.

Part of this bill deals with the vehicle inspection care system. There are changes in the act that essentially are going to create what is akin to the TSSA for vehicle inspections, if I understand and I'm reading the bill correctly. If I'm wrong, the minister can point that out. But I just want to say—oh, my God, another TSSA kind of organization? It's like we're getting rid of government red tape to create bureaucratic red tape within an arm's-length agency that you can never get a hold of or get a hold of the decision-makers to be able to deal with complaints.

We've had—and I'm sure members of this House on all sides have had—all kinds of constituents come to our office when it comes to dealings with the TSSA in regard to gas stations or what happened with licensing of electricians when they had to go through their master electrician—can you imagine? The TSSA, when they took over the regulatory stuff around electricians, said that people who had been in business for 25 and 30 years, running their own businesses, had to go qualify for an exam to get a master electrician's licence. People who were licensed, who had a licence for 20 or 30 years, who had run a successful business for 25 or 30 years, had to challenge the exam, rather than grandfathering, the way the government normally does stuff. It was pretty insulting for some of them.

The part that I didn't like was that it was almost impossible to get these people into a room to have a discussion about how we could fix this. We finally got them in the room and, of course, they said, "We don't have to fix it." Why? Because essentially—they didn't say this—they didn't have to listen to us, because we had delegated all of our regulatory powers, not to cabinet but to that agency. If we're creating another TSSA-type organization in this bill, this is not anywhere near where I want it to go. Remember what happened with Superior Propane, or whatever it was, in downtown Toronto here. I think this is a bad idea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm very pleased to rise today in the Legislature to speak on this bill. I applaud the minister's leadership on this and his predecessors who also worked on this.

As has been said many times over the last few weeks, we have some of the safest roads in North America, but we need to make them safer. I look at this legislation and I think very specifically about my community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore and some of the benefits that will arise from this for my constituents. Etobicoke is one of the

parts of this province with the highest proportion of seniors and, of course, many seniors, as they age, may have some medical issues that might challenge their ability to drive. This legislation will help address some of the issues, to make it easier to retrieve their driving privileges once their medical issues are stabilized. I think that's a very good thing for many of my constituents.

But, more importantly, it's things like making school crossings and pedestrian crossings safer. Like the minister, I'm the father of a young child, and I drive my daughter to school every day. I want to see all drivers have to stop at a pedestrian crossing and make sure children and others are able to cross safely before traffic continues. This legislation will do that.

I want to make sure that we have stricter fines for those who drive while they're distracted, which isn't just cellphones. It could be your morning coffee, it could be a bagel; it could be any number of things. We all see that when we're around in our communities. I think this legislation is very important in that, and also laws around making accident sites and vehicle breakdowns safer by extending the "slow down, move over" laws to tow trucks. I have many highways in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and this is an issue in my community as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I would remind everybody that I am actually neighbours with the Minister of Transportation, so I think we both have a very good understanding of the problems in the GTA, specifically in York region, and I'm hoping that I'm going to see him—I believe January 28 is the date chosen by the York region chapter of the Professional Engineers Ontario to hold a symposium on transportation to get our roads safer and to give us their opinions on some of the proposals that we're seeing in this Bill 31.

I would like to see safer roads, just like everybody else here in the GTA and the rest of the province. I think that people do want to cycle, but we have to understand that the weather conditions are not always co-operative with cycling.

We can get traffic moving by synchronizing traffic lights. We can get traffic moving by keeping—the minister knows that I'm very concerned about bus lanes on some of the roads in York region, that I want to see the Highway 7 rapidway stay on Highway 7 instead of disrupting all the commuters and businesses on Bathurst and Centre.

I think that we need to get everybody in the province thinking about how we can get cars moving on our roads, get more people on transit, get more people to carpool and get more people to cycle when the weather co-operates. It's not just about keeping our roads for cars. I agree that we need to share the roads with pedestrians and cyclists. We want to encourage our kids and ourselves to have a healthy lifestyle.

I'd like to see the Minister of Transportation on York region roads with me when the weather improves this spring: cycling, walking and, yes, even getting the traffic

moving. Hopefully we can get some traffic lights synchronized as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the minister for final comments.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank all of the members who stood to provide questions and comments on Bill 31 here this morning.

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I'll start with the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. I did listen very closely and I did my best in the opening debate this morning to acknowledge the work that has been done by members. Of course, I did specifically reference some on this side of the House.

The member opposite is quite right: The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka and a number of others have worked on this and have worked on ideas that have helped get us to where we are today with this legislation. It is important to acknowledge the good work of every member in this House on these kinds of files, regardless of which caucus that member comes from. So I do acknowledge that.

The member from Timmins-James Bay: I heard his specific comments when he zeroed in on one particular aspect of the bill. I didn't acknowledge in my opening this morning that in fact his colleague the member from Parkdale-High Park actually worked very hard on helping to improve the notion of sharing the road between motorists and cyclists, fighting hard for that one-metre rule that I talked about, that's an important part of this particular bill. So I want to acknowledge that member.

Of course, I listened closely as well to the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, my colleague and my neighbour, as she pointed out, the member from Thornhill, with respect to both of the points that they have raised.

Generally speaking, though, to hear the comments from all four who have stood here this morning to talk about this, what I am encouraged by is that sense that I have managed to pick up over the last number of weeks since Bill 31 was first introduced, that general notion that there is broad support for getting behind a bill that will keep Ontario's roads safe; that will help our municipal partners collect outstanding Provincial Offences Act fines; that will help motorists and cyclists share the road; that will help reduce, if not eliminate, distracted driving; that will help bring forward, for example, drug-impaired driving sanctions for the first time in the province's history; that will bring improvements to the motor vehicle inspection system.

To all of the other moving parts or elements that have gone into this bill—to hear this morning that there is, generally speaking, broad support, is encouraging. I do look forward to working closely with every member in this House to get this bill passed.

Again, I thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to discuss it this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this morning, as the official opposition's transpor-

tation critic, to address Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act. It's known in some corners as the Wynne Liberals' long-awaited distracted driving legislation.

I would note, off the top, the irony of the proposed law on distractions being introduced by in fact a government that is itself so obviously distracted, Speaker—distracted to the point that it is really unable to keep its eyes on the road and leading us, perhaps, straight into the ditch time after time.

There is no doubt that we do need to address new and emerging safety concerns on our roadways, as this legislation proposes, much as we need to address the distractions that surround this government's agenda.

A few years ago, we saw the Wynne Liberals so distracted with the need to hold on to power, in fact, that they cancelled two gas plants that left us with a \$1 billion-plus tab to pick up. In the end, they distracted the electorate to the point that it has taken us three years, really, to unravel the mess—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Point of order, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I remind the member from Kitchener-Conestoga to stay focused on the bill.

Mr. Michael Harris: I believe I've at least referenced "distracted" multiple times.

I'll continue on with more distractions that have helped feed the scandals around eHealth and Ornge as well. I believe the government is too wrapped up in itself and really distracted by the lights that shine on them every time they make an announcement—and they do make a lot of them, of course—to take the time to ensure proper oversight. With eHealth, it cost us \$1 billion. Then there was Ornge. Now we have—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Speaker, this member is so far off topic of the bill and so completely out of order. He's continuing, and I'm not sure how many minutes of his time he plans on talking about something other than the bill—

Mr. Michael Harris: Fifty-seven.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Otherwise, the rules have no value if we're not enforcing them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member for the point of order. I would ask the member to again focus primarily on the bill and discuss the debate at hand.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, well, thank you, Speaker. I mean, I do have 57 minutes and I am—

Interjection: Just getting started.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm just getting rolling here on this bill, as you'll see. I'm going to take the hour. I was hoping the minister would have taken the full hour to really pitch to Ontarians the need for this. I know that the parliamentary assistant typically gets to chime in as well. I was hoping, of course, to hear from them. Nonetheless,

I really do see it in my critic file: We've got lots of announcements, but when the rubber hits the road, the Wynne Liberals are too distracted to live up to their word.

I think of the winter maintenance announcements in Grafton and then repeated here in the House: \$15 million for new equipment, but only half that actually went to new equipment. When it came to clearing the highways of snow a week ago, instead of just talking about it, the Wynne Liberals were nowhere to be found. Instead, we get more finger pointing, more distractions.

Mr. Grant Crack: On a point of order, Speaker: I would just ask the member from Kitchener–Conestoga perhaps when he's addressing the government and the Premier to refrain from using "Wynne Liberals" and say "the Premier and the government."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member again to refrain from any comments that may be construed as perhaps derogatory, and I would ask that the member would continue to speak and address the bill at hand.

Mr. Michael Harris: All right. Well, I was just saying that the Liberals were nowhere to be found. Instead, of course, we get more finger pointing, more distractions—going back to the bill, of course.

Speaker, you know the routine: "It's not us; it's them," the old Wizard of Oz approach, a "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain" type of analogy. Like when we hear the finance minister point the finger at the Prime Minister for lacking federal transfer payments—this despite the fact that the government's own public accounts documents show we actually got \$600 million more from Ottawa last year to help fund our roads and infrastructure, things that are mentioned in Bill 31. Distractions—we've had 11 years of distractions while the same regime doubled the debt and then continued to blame lower-than-expected revenues and the federal government.

Now, as the minister points at the feds and doubles down on his claims that he can still balance the books in 2017-18, he also reveals that Ontario is collecting half a billion less in tax revenue than expected.

Mr. Grant Crack: Point of order, Speaker: I don't believe the member from Kitchener–Conestoga is referring to the bill before the House at all. I would ask the Speaker's indulgence to perhaps, if you feel fit, remind him of such.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member to speak directly to the bill now, or I may be forced to move on.

Mr. Michael Harris: I can only imagine that folks on television are distracted by all the interruptions, perhaps, by the government interrupting me.

You know what? I should note that when it comes to the legislative channel, the good folks up running things—I do want to welcome the former member for Durham, John O'Toole. I know he tunes in regularly to the legislative channel, and I'd welcome him this morning to that. I'm going to get to him later on pertaining to

the bill, but I think we need to consider some of the very important safety protection measures we see in this bill to address distracted driving. And more, you can understand that I will also be addressing some concerns both with this bill and with the distracted government that is proposing it. I think that's fair, Speaker; I really do. I hope you'll give me some discretion here on that.

A case in point is the revelation from our Auditor General that the Premier's decision to reopen those contracts, of course, will cost the taxpayers an additional \$468 million that could go toward road safety measures in the province of Ontario. But of course, we find ourselves debating and speaking to, in many cases, timely measures of legislation with a government that continues—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask that the members refrain—we have the speaker back on topic. I would appreciate attentive listening to his debate and this bill, in fairness. My role is to ensure there is fair debate on both sides, so I would appreciate and thank you for your consideration.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'll get back to my notes here, perhaps.

All that said, it's not too often that we have an opportunity in this House to work through these continued distractions and share common ground, to bring all sides together for a common goal. The truth is, there are shared goals amongst all of us here for the protection and maintenance of public safety on Ontario roads. As such, I felt that Bill 31, Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act, offered one of those rare opportunities to encapsulate the work of government, opposition and our diligent road safety partners in the effort to protect motorists, pedestrians and cyclists alike as we address new and emerging challenges on our roadways. It offered us that opportunity, and while we do see this proposed Legislature taking some solid steps delivering on that opportunity towards road safety, I look forward in the time I've been provided—about 10 minutes, less all those distractions—to the opportunity to deliver my remarks on road safety.

I look forward in the time provided to also explain how it missteps on further road safety opportunities and leaves some concerning questions on the government's direction on a series of fronts. So in the rest of the hour I have left, I will be examining and focusing on both the direction and the missed direction—or in some cases, misdirection—to making Ontario's roads safer.

Specifically, Speaker, I will use that focus to examine each section of this far-reaching bill. There are a series of steps to go through, as you will see and hear. From distracted driving to enhanced impaired driving penalties, including drug-impaired driving; bicycling measures; rules surrounding medical reporting; a new vehicle inspection centre program; emergency vehicles measures; empowering municipal unpaid fine collections; extended length B-trains on transport trucks; questions surrounding chrome yellow buses and the lack of roundabout rules, there will be a little something for everyone, so stay tuned.

As we've heard, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act combines two pieces of proposed legislation from the previous session and adds a couple of new facets to the earlier distracted driving and unpaid fine collection provisions. I do want to be clear, as we begin walking through this newly merged proposal, that given the impacts of distracted driving and impaired driving, it is essential that we do take significant steps towards better education and tougher penalties to ensure drivers are focussing on the road.

Further to that, we also support efforts to give our municipalities the tools they require to collect unpaid fines. There is no doubt that, after years of waiting for government to grant these powers while watching countless millions in fines go uncollected, AMO and its municipalities will welcome the opportunity to add the revenue this legislation allows.

I know I am running out of time, as we recess prior to question period, so I'll end my remarks there. I've got 47 minutes left, less the time we were distracted by the government interrupting me. I wish the minister was here, of course, to hear my remarks, as I was for him. So I will leave it to you to make—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would remind the member that, in the absence of a particular member, you are not to reference that. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Seeing as the time is 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock on a point of order.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion with respect to a select committee on sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion. Do we agree? I heard a no.

It is now time for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm sick of their games.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I'm sick of some people interrupting while I'm trying to get attention.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Are you challenging the Chair?

Mr. Steve Clark: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for introductions.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to introduce the family of page Nicole Eaton: Wendy Eaton, Sean Eaton, Ali Eaton and Quinton Eaton. Two of them are here and

two aren't, but they're coming to question period. Welcome.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to introduce Keely Hargraft, who is a co-op student in my office, and Justin MacLean, who is on his way here, who manages the office.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome the manufacturers and dealers of the assistive devices organization and also recognize Steve Cranna, the outgoing chair of the Canadian Assistive Devices Association. Welcome to Queen's Park and thank you for your efforts.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome Josh Wiwcharyk and Tom Elltoft. Both are from Parliament Oak school in the parent group there, CARE. Thanks for coming.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to introduce the students from St. Helen Catholic School in my riding of Davenport—accompanying them are Mr. Carnovale and Ms. Uncao, who are the grade 4 and 5 teachers—as well as students from Dewson Street Junior Public School, avec M^{lle} Segreto. Bienvenue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure today to look up in the gallery and see a number of representatives from the wonderful county of Huron. Thanks for making the trek to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to introduce page captain Ethan Sequeira's mother, Dimple Sequeira, and sister Meagan Sequeira from the great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. They are in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: This morning I want to welcome Craig Miller, Daniel Blocka, Mark Agro, Jon Allen and Steve Gilmour from the assistive devices association. We had a great meeting this morning.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Stephen McDonald and Sarah Marsh to the Legislature today. Sarah was just elected to Kitchener city council.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature my good friend Mr. Rohan Linton and his two sons, Justin and Dylan. Hey, guys. I grew up with them in Don Valley East.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome Jim Wilson and his daughter Victoria here. Now, this is not the Jim Wilson we know on this side of the House; this is the "Silverado Sheriff," one of the largest GM dealerships in Ontario.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I've got several guests to announce. Rossana Magnotta is here today representing the G. Magnotta Foundation for Vector-Borne Diseases.

David Kelso is here from the Ontario Lyme Alliance and Larry Herr from the Ontario Lyme Alliance.

Also, we have the Minister of Health and Wellness as well as the Minister of Seniors from Nova Scotia here today, the Honourable Leo Glavine.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to welcome what will be about 100 people from Goderich township in Huron county—some of them are in the building, but not yet here with us—as well as many members from the Ontario Landowners Association from across the province

of Ontario. They are here to see the petition of right which calls for the de-amalgamation of Goderich township being presented to the Attorney General at the end of this question period. Seventy-five percent of the property owners have signed the petition.

I will mention the names of a few of the leaders in the community who will be here with us today: Cindy Moyer of the Huron-Perth landowners, who did the research to find out that the petition of right is a law that will help; Brian Barnim, a councillor from Goderich township who led the charge to pursue de-amalgamation; David Hemingway, president of the Huron-Perth Landowners Association; Tom Black, president of the Ontario Landowners Association; and Roman Sarachman, president of the Ontario De-amalgamation Network, from Flamborough.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to introduce Tony Ayala, a graduate of King's University College and a resident of London North Centre. Welcome, Tony.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Please join me in introducing Michael O'Brien and Leonard Swartz, who are joining us in the House this morning. They're part of the Friends of the Museums of Mississauga. Michael O'Brien is a quality engineer at Messier-Bugatti-Dowty, a great constituent of Mississauga South and a great contributor to our community. Thank you very much, both of you, for being here today.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I ask everyone to join me in welcoming citizens from my wonderful community of Burlington: the parents of our page captain today, Ella Walsh—her mom, Sylvie Walsh, and John Walsh—and Ella's grandmother, Elizabeth Zalewski. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome Gabby Dwosh to the House. Gabby is the niece of my very good law school friend, Jonathan Boulakia. Gabby is here as one of a lot of kids from the Bialik Hebrew Day School. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like, this morning, on behalf of all the members here, to pay tribute to and congratulate Suzanne Côté, who was just appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. She's a lawyer from Quebec. She's one of three Quebec lawyers appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. I wish her all the best in her new endeavour.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Good morning. I would like to introduce members in our gallery: Mike Longo; Marshal Holman and his mother, Carman King; Frank Lucas; Paul Levin; Gayle King; and Janet Issac.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

I do want to take a moment, just before we move into the next section, to remind all members that your co-operation is necessary to ensure that we use the time wisely for introductions. Please keep them to introductions and maybe the title of the person or persons who represent a group. But if you start getting into explanations, I will be accused of allowing statements to be made, and that's not permissible during that time frame. Please, as a reminder, stay with just introducing the

guests here at Queen's Park. I'd appreciate your co-operation.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PESTICIDES

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Premier: Your government announced on Tuesday that it's asking for comment on an 80% reduction of neonicotinoid pesticides by 2017. The Grain Farmers of Ontario project this ban will cost them \$630 million a year, but Health Canada said there is no conclusive scientific evidence that this ban will cut bee mortality rates.

Your government said it would only take action if there was conclusive scientific evidence that neonics are a problem, yet in a scrum yesterday your Minister of the Environment said, "All of the science is inconclusive."

Premier, why are you cutting neonics by 80% and hurting farmers without the conclusive research evidence necessary to back it up?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. This is a very important issue. Of course it is important to our grain and oilseed farmers. It is important for beekeepers across the province. But there is a much greater issue at stake here, and that is the health of pollinators across the province—and, quite frankly, across the country—and the ability for us to have a healthy ecosystem.

What I said at the beginning, when I was the Minister of Agriculture and Food, and what I continue to say is that we need to make sure that we take the competing interests—because there are competing interests—and we act in the context of the greatest interest, which is that we have a healthy ecosystem and that we preserve that ecosystem for our children and our grandchildren.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: We do both agree that there is an issue with bee health and mortality in Ontario. In fact, you took the initiative. You created the Bee Health Working Group to study the problem. When the group reported, they didn't recommend a ban; they didn't recommend a reduction of neonics. What they did recommend were new best practices for using neonics during planting, because the planting process is when the insecticide can be transferred through airborne dust. Those recommendations were acted on during planting last spring—for example, through the use of a dust-reducing lubricant. As a result, we are told, bee deaths were cut by 70%.

Farmers are doing their part to cut bee mortality. Why punish them for the progress they have achieved?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change will want to speak to this, but let me just say that we know that

Ontario's economy is driven by a strong agricultural sector. The sector relies on pollinators to be productive. We have worked with the bee working group. The reality is that best practices do point to a reduction in the use of neonicotinoids, and that is what we're doing. What we're saying is that we have set an aspirational target to reduce the use of neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed by 80% by 2017.

We are not proposing a ban. We are proposing a reduction. We are proposing a different way of using this pesticide. We are working very hard to achieve an over-winter honey-bee mortality rate reduction of 15% by 2020. That is our target, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-ary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Premier. I used to work for OMAFRA. I remember the extensive pest-management training. I remember the efforts that went into educating and encouraging farmers to embrace conservation tillage.

Today, in 2014, Premier, farmers are doing their best. It's the norm for them to have environmental farm plans. You should know that, as a former Minister of Agriculture. Ontario farmers are outstanding environmental stewards. And now, seemingly, you're asking them to go back in time, using conventional tillage practices and pesticides that are more harmful to the environment.

Premier, going backwards is not an option for Ontario farmers. So I ask you today: What is the alternative practice that you're going to encourage them to use?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would ask the member opposite: What is the alternative if we lose our pollinators? The fact is that we are going to work with the farmers. I have had many conversations with the head of the grain and oilseed farmers. I understand the concerns and I have committed to continue to work with them. We have set some aspirational targets to change the practices—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That'll do. Don't worry, I'll get down to the individual.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have set some aspirational targets. There is time to continue to work with the farmers; they know that. I've had person-to-person conversations with them. I will be meeting many of them tomorrow. But the practices do need to change, and we're going to work with them to make sure that they do.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier. For three years, we've been asking for a line-by-line budget for the Pan Am Games. Yesterday, we found out the reason that we've never gotten one. "Budget" apparently has a much different meaning if you're a Liberal cabinet minister than it does for regular people in the province of Ontario. Some \$121 million was set aside for security; \$245 million is actually the expense so far.

The Auditor General's report showed that \$39 million was set aside for a security contractor; \$81 million was actually spent and was in the budget. The reason? Only half the job was actually budgeted for when the contract was put out.

Premier, who is being held responsible for this level of incompetence at Pan Am? And if you won't punish those who are responsible, aren't you just encouraging this kind of incompetence to continue there?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I had the opportunity to start my day in a gym this morning with some young people. We were making an announcement with the Minister of Education and the Associate Minister of Long-Term Care and Wellness. We were talking about moving to having 60 minutes of physical activity in schools across this province, partnering with Ophea and with Canadian Tire.

In that gym were a number of athletes who are right now training for the Pan and the Parapan American Games. If the member opposite asked those young people the price that they would put on their security, I think what those young people would say is, "You know what? It's your responsibility to do everything you can to keep me safe. I'm going to train every day. I'm going to train eight hours a day on the trampoline, on the track, in the pool. You, government, you keep us safe. That's your job."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, if budgeting were a Pan Am sport, this government would be disqualified for incompetence-enhancing drugs. They don't know what they're doing. They can't even answer a question about budgeting.

Premier, the auditor's report yesterday had more revelations about management problems at Pan Am. Had the security contracts been put up for bid earlier, it would have saved taxpayers money. Had the government factored new police contracts into its security costs instead of basing the costs on contracts it knew would expire before the games, it might have had something that resembled an actual cost for security. Had the government not underestimated the number of venue-operating days by a whopping 317%, it might not have ended up with a security contract that came in 106% over budget.

This is some pretty basic stuff that TO2015 is missing here and the Ministry of Community Safety has messed up. Premier, will someone be held responsible, or will accountability be yet another thing that's overlooked at the Pan Am Games?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Many of these questions were answered at the technical briefings, which the member opposite did not attend, Mr. Speaker. We're happy to provide the information.

But I want to just go back to my original answer, because this member has made some pretty outrageous statements, in my opinion, about these games. He said on

September 30 of this year, "There's no comparison between the Pan Am Games and the Olympic Games. These are tier-two games that we're having here."

He also said, on July 17, "There's no reason to cheer about these games and everybody out there knows it."

I take him back to the gym this morning, Mr. Speaker, where there were young people who are training eight hours a day. They're getting ready for the Pan/Parapan Games. They are racing in their wheelchairs, they are diving into pools, they are jumping on trampolines, and they are getting ready for the Pan/Parapan and the Olympics. I would ask him to look those young people in the face and make those—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, come to order.

Mr. Todd Smith: Premier, that was a gold-medal performance in deflection. You can't answer a simple question about the budget for the Pan Am Games. You can't do it, because it's a pipe dream for you. The budget doesn't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know. It actually helped. Thank you.

Final supplementary, please.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. We're not talking about the athletes here and their performances. Our Canadian athletes are going to be great.

We're talking about budgets and we're talking about missing deadlines. You don't understand it, Premier. You don't understand anything about the Pan Am Games. You're even—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport will come to order.

Please finish.

1050

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm trying. Thank you, Speaker.

Budgeting seems to be a lost art for your government. This week, it came out that you guys are spending \$400,000 on a porcupine for the Pan Am Games for goodness' sake. Come on, Premier. This is ridiculous.

Will you commit to holding Pan Am officials accountable if they miss one more deadline or blow through another budget? Or will you just pay whatever invoice comes onto your desk, whatever cost is necessary for the taxpayer—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is talking about the budgets. I'm very pleased that the Auditor General was able to look at the numbers. Her report confirms that the procurement of private security was transparent and fair. She confirms and contradicts the claims of the opposition. What she said is that the budget for the security of the athletes, spectators and volunteers is \$239.5 million, Mr. Speaker. It's part of the budget that she has said is reasonable. The fact is that those security costs can evolve.

I am talking about the athletes, the safety of people like Rosie MacLennan, Josh Cassidy and Damian Warner, who are some of Ontario's finest athletes. It is their safety and it is their performance that we're talking about when we talk about the Pan/Parapan Games, Mr. Speaker. I hope that at some point the member opposite can understand that and can understand that this is about the athletes.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's sure not about the taxpayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings—the second time—will come to order, and you know what that means.

I've stopped the clock for a purpose. I am getting quite frustrated with people yelling across the floor—one. Two, yelling people's names across the floor, you're not following the convention of the House, and I'm getting tired of it. It elevates the excitement; it doesn't bring it down, and I want you to bring this down to intelligent question-and-answer and debate.

New question.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, 87% of women in Canada say they have been harassed at one point or another. It's reality, plain and simple.

Yesterday, the House passed a motion—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Premier?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier. Sorry, Speaker.

Yesterday, the House passed a motion for a select committee on sexual harassment to be struck. I was proud to support that motion, as were my colleagues here in the NDP caucus.

But here is the reality in Ontario: Funds for victims' services are being cut. We are still waiting for the government to implement the recommendations of the coroner's inquest into the murder of Lori Dupont. Employers and employees don't have clear tools to deal with harassment in the workplace.

Speaker, we need to act now. When is the Premier going to actually strike a committee on sexual harassment?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I understand that the House supported the motion, because, in essence, we believe that there needs to be a committee struck. I have said that

we should move ahead with that, and we will move ahead as expeditiously as possible.

I hope that we can agree that there are many voices that need to be heard on this subject. We need to hear from young people, we need to hear from aboriginal women, we need to hear from the LGBTQ community, and we need to hear from visible minorities because this is an issue that affects all people across society. So my hope would be that the work of that committee, which will be struck in the tradition of this Legislature—my hope would be that that committee would consult broadly with people from all groups.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We are at a unique and important point of time. Sexual harassment is being discussed publicly and openly in a way that it really never has before in history, Speaker. We need to send a clear message—a very clear message—that sexual harassment is an issue that we can talk about without politics and without partisanship. When will the Premier actually strike a non-partisan select committee of this Legislature to deal with this issue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, as I have said, striking an all-party committee is something that I agree with. I have said from the beginning that I was open to it. From the time the member of the official opposition asked for this, I said I was open to it. I think we need to move ahead and do that.

As non-partisan, all-party committees have been struck under the Conservative government, under the NDP government and under the Liberal government, we will form that committee as it reflects this Legislature. That is the tradition of the place. It is what has been done under every party, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that we should continue in that tradition.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, there are a lot of things that we don't agree on in this Legislature, in this House. The Premier and I are both women who lead our political parties, and we agree, I think, as do the Conservatives here, that sexual harassment is an issue that needs to be dealt with here in Ontario, so let's get on with it.

This House sent a message that is plain and simple: Stop playing politics and stop pretending that this is something that cannot be done in a way that isn't partisan and isn't a political football—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry, stop the clock. The Minister of Finance will come to order.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Strike the committee on this issue; strike the select committee so that it reflects all of the voices in this Legislature in an equal way. I need to ask, finally, when will this Premier do the right thing and make sure that this committee is established? When is it going to happen?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the leader of the third party is taking a ferocious ap-

proach on this. I am just as ferocious on this. The reality is that I have said yes, we need to have a committee. I have said yes, we need to do this as soon as possible, and the House leaders are going to work on that. I have said yes, we need to have an all-party committee, and yes, we need to have many voices weigh in on this issue. This is an important moment.

I have said also that we need to strike that committee as it reflects this Legislature, as every select committee under the Conservatives, under the NDP and under the Liberals has been done. That's how we're going to move forward, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We can do anything we want by unanimous consent, Premier. Don't be snowing anybody—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And I think, with all due respect, the leader of the third party needs to ask who is injecting politics into this, Mr. Speaker. We've said yes.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier, Speaker—but I have to say that I will not be embarrassed for being passionate about this issue. It is a disgrace the way you responded—a disgrace.

My next question is on a different issue. Last week, the Legislature got behind the NDP plan for a national \$15-a-day child care program that is being spearheaded across this country by Thomas Mulcair. I was proud that our Legislature and our province sent a very strong message that we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I didn't get the House quiet for you to interject.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I was proud that Ontario, our province, sent a strong message that we want affordable child care here in our province. But the Liberals are cutting millions of dollars out of child care, Speaker. Can the Premier explain to parents why she's slashing budgets for child care centres across 18 communities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: In fact, the number of child care spaces has actually increased over the last year.

Interjection.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm sorry. One of the things about having licensed child care centres is that we actually know how many spots we have licensed. Since we took office in 2003, the number of licensed child care spots in Ontario has increased by 130,000. If you look at each of the last four or five years, the number of licensed child care spaces has increased by 18,000 each year. On average, the number of licensed child care spaces has increased by 18,000. If you look at the funding, it's double. So I'm not really quite sure what the problem is.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, by cutting funding from public not-for-profit child care centres, the Premier is taking a step backwards when we should be moving forward. Because of Liberal cuts, the Coronation Park Day Nursery in Sarnia, a not-for-profit child care centre that has provided child care since 1972, is closing its doors tomorrow, and 100 parents are going to be stuck trying to find reliable, safe, affordable child care in that community.

For once, would the Premier's actions actually support her words? Will she restore the funding for Coronation Park Day Nursery, and make sure that the cuts to child care that are happening right now in this province stop?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let me go back to the point that I was making at the end of my comments. The truth is that we have more than doubled the funding for child care since 2003. In fact, we now spend over a billion dollars on child care.

I think you will find that the decision to close this particular child care centre, which is operated by a municipality, was made by the municipality. But what does remain as the absolute funding history is that, in fact, we have increased the funding to child care each and every year we have been in office, including this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Municipalities are stuck holding the bag because this government is not funding at appropriate levels, and they're making cuts that are forcing them into these untenable decisions.

Ontario is behind a \$15-a-day child care plan, apparently. We all voted for it in this House, yet the Premier is slashing funding to child care. Coronation Park is actually closing its doors tomorrow. That's only one child care centre; over 18 communities are seeing the same kind of thing happening.

I can't believe that this minister refuses to acknowledge what's really happening—not what happened last year, not what happened in 2003, but what's happening right now, what's happening tomorrow, in 2014. Why are this Premier and this Liberal government taking us backwards when we should be moving forward on a plan for safe, affordable, licensed child care in this province?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The member opposite wants to know what's going on this year with funding, so I would just draw to her attention that we increased funding by \$90 million in 2012-13, \$68 million in 2013-14, and \$84 million in 2014-15—that would be this year, Speaker. We did in fact increase funding to child care by \$84 million this year, and we'll continue to do so in future years. Those are the facts.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Minister, \$2.7 billion is waiting for Ontario in the Build-

ing Canada Fund for infrastructure. While your government has yet to submit a list of projects for this application, you were quoted last week stating that the upcoming application from Ontario is "unlikely" to include a request for infrastructure funding for the Ring of Fire.

Minister, could you please let us know which specific infrastructure projects are more important to your government than making the Ring of Fire a reality?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted that the member has raised this question in the Legislature, because it gives me an opportunity to share with all of my colleagues here the challenge that we have had with the federal government on this program.

Since March, we've been asking the federal government to share the details of the program with us that will help us in prioritizing what programs we're going to put forward. It was only this week, after numerous requests, that our staff were invited down to Ottawa to be able to see this information, so finally we have the information we need. We're going to be prioritizing our projects.

But what the federal government has been doing with infrastructure projects, here in Ontario and across the country, is playing games with projects like the Ring of Fire, trying to suggest that their portion should be funded from programs that are to go to roads, bridges, transit and other important infrastructure. They need to do what our Minister of Northern Development and Mines has done: have a separate funding proposal for a billion dollars to go to infrastructure in the Ring of Fire. That's what they need to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the minister: It's hard to believe that Cliffs Natural Resources at one time predicted that they would have a mine producing chromite from the Ring of Fire for refining in Ontario by 2015.

I find it interesting that you choose to mention the federal government now. It was just over one year ago, as Cliffs made the decision to idle their project in the Ring of Fire, they specifically cited "unfinished agreements with the government of Ontario that are critical to the project's economic viability."

Minister, how can you blame the federal government when the largest player in the Ring of Fire made such a clear indictment of your lack of action?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's not a question of blame; it's a question of total lack of action on the part of the federal government. We made a commitment in our last budget to fund infrastructure in the Ring of Fire to the tune of a billion dollars. Their commitment right now is zero. They have not made a commitment whatsoever.

Just recently, they went forward with a further \$6 billion in the small amount of infrastructure that they're funding across this country, and that was to go to federal buildings, federal projects—nothing for the Ring of Fire. They had an opportunity this week to match our commitment in the Ring of Fire. They failed this week. Thus far, they have failed incredibly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The members from Leeds–Grenville, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Please finish.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's time for the federal government to come forward with a proposal to match our commitment of a billion dollars in the Ring of Fire. They can keep playing games all they want with infrastructure projects. It's a very simple request: Match our funding. That's all we're asking.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. The Auditor General released a report very clearly addressing the issues of security at the Pan Am Games. The Auditor General makes it very clear that there are some serious concerns with respect to security costs at the Pan Am Games. The security budgets have doubled. The government is behind schedule in terms of signing contracts. The auditor says that because of that, costs could go up. In fact, some of the private security contracts have more than doubled in just one year. But the Liberal ministers keep on insisting that everything is just fine, everything is just peachy.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians, did her Liberal ministers read the same report that everyone else read?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm happy to take the question from the member opposite.

Yesterday, the Auditor General put out a report that confirmed what we have been saying all along, that this government followed the procurement process in order to provide that security need for the Pan Am Games.

We're quite confident with TO2015 and the work that they've been doing, and we're very confident with the work that the ISU has been doing, which is made up by the OPP, our federal and municipal partners. I think we should take their advice; they are the experts. We believe we're in good hands. We will not compromise the safety of Ontarians during these games, and we have full faith in the OPP and TO2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The question is about the security costs, and this is the Auditor General of Ontario, someone we entrust with the responsibility of ensuring that there is oversight. The Auditor General says there are problems that this government is not addressing. It's very clear. Let me quote the auditor: "A lack of clear communication has led to a potential security gap."

If this government is so concerned about security, why don't they address the security gap that the Auditor General has presented to you, has told you about? The games are less than eight months away, and we have no security for the fields that the Pan Am Games are being played on.

The auditor is clear that leaving plans to the last minute will cost us more: higher costs in recruiting, higher

costs in training and planning, and the list goes on. Will the Premier tell Ontarians how much it's going to cost to make this fix in the eleventh hour?

Hon. Michael Coteau: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I do want to remind the member, jog his memory, as to how this Auditor General's report came about.

I remember very distinctly, in late March, when I was appointed as the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, from day one, that party and that member were asking questions about the procurement process around a private security contract. They were questioning our procurement practice, they were questioning the award and they were questioning the bidder.

1110

In fact, they asked the Auditor General to look at the process of their procurement. This is what the Auditor General said in that regard: "The all-party Standing Committee on Public Accounts asked us to review the processes used to award security contracts for the games. We found that the selection processes were fair and transparent, in accordance with government procurement policies, and took into consideration"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Minister, I've noticed a large delegation of Ontario chiefs at Queen's Park both yesterday and today. I'm aware that this government will be partaking in a series of round tables with the delegation to continue to build and renew our relationship with First Nations in Ontario. Our government has demonstrated its commitment to invest in First Nations while the federal government continues to fall short on its responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can you inform the House on what this government has done to cement our relationship with the Chiefs of Ontario and the First Nations in Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: This government was responsible for creating the first stand-alone Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, in 2007. This reflected the importance we placed on developing a stronger and a broader partnership with First Nations communities in Ontario.

This week's meetings represent another significant step in renewing our relationship and the journey toward reconciliation. Eight different round table sessions have been scheduled with various ministers and Chiefs of Ontario. This highlights the accessible, transparent and open approach this government is taking. These round tables provide a forum for meaningful conversations to take place on topics such as clean water, business development, poverty alleviation, murdered and missing aboriginal women, and treaty awareness.

Mr. Speaker, we want to have frank discussions on how we can work with First Nations in this province

because when all communities succeed, this province is going to be a better place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: These round table sessions are significant and showcase the progress this province continues in strengthening the relationship with First Nations in Ontario. This is a great event organized by the Chiefs of Ontario organization, and I commend our government for being dedicated to these conversations with First Nations leaders from across Ontario.

The minister has affirmed that this government takes its commitment to First Nations communities very seriously. I know our government is taking a leadership role in many issues impacting First Nations and people in our province. The minister highlighted some of the topics that we're discussing in these meetings. I look forward to my participation this afternoon in the business development and poverty alleviation sessions.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister please inform the House on the significance of treaties and treaty awareness?

Hon. David Zimmer: Treaties represent the solemn agreements that we live together on this land through the formal exchange of promises that created the rights and responsibilities of Canada, of Ontario, and of First Nations. Treaties are still a part of what we do today. For instance, with the Algonquins of Ontario, an agreement is being negotiated today in the 21st century.

My mandate letter committed this government to moving forward with a treaty strategy that will promote constructive engagement with First Nations communities, revitalize treaty relationships and improve socio-economic outcomes for aboriginal people. Together, through respectful and meaningful dialogue, we will come to better understand about different perspectives on treaties and work together on practical solutions and practical initiatives that will continue to support our strong treaty relationships.

HOME CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Senior citizens across Ontario are losing publicly funded home care services. According to these patients and their families, there is no one in your ministry nor your bureaucracy—the community care access centres, or CCACs—willing to acknowledge the cuts, to stand up and protect the critical home care services they need. This is the state of home care service on your government's watch today in Ontario.

Minister, do you think it's acceptable? Do you think it's justifiable to have our seniors' care cut?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course I don't think it's acceptable. In fact, that's not what we're doing at all. We're dramatically increasing our funding to home and community care.

I have to say that I was hoping this question would come from the NDP because I was going to offer the entire caucus a briefing on what we are doing for CCACs. I

think I need to include the PCs as well in this briefing, because the truth is absolutely contrary to what we're hearing.

We've roughly doubled our funding to the CCACs over the last decade, to community and home care. We've also increased \$250 million this year alone, a three-quarters-of-a-billion-dollar increase in three years' time. We know, and the opposition parties know—both of them—our commitment to transferring more care closer to people's homes, where they want to see that care, where it can be provided effectively and efficiently. We aren't cutting services; we aren't cutting costs; we're doing the opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Walker: Well, Minister, I'd like to give you a briefing from the people who are calling my office and all my colleagues, telling me there are cuts happening. It's appalling that you're going to spend \$450,000 a month in interest for an empty MaRS office building but cut front-line care to our seniors. We still have not heard you even acknowledge that there are cuts being made, and we're hearing it every day in our offices.

Minister, we think your most important task is that you stand up and provide services for our very needy seniors. Will you show leadership and issue a directive that funding will be restored to the CCACs ASAP?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I think it's important that we speak accurately and with the facts. There is no funding to be restored, because we've been increasing funding year over year to our CCACs and to home and community care, and we're seeing the results across the province.

I know we have been talking about Erie St. Clair. The reality with Erie St. Clair is that we've doubled the funding over the last 10 years, with a \$3-million increase this year alone—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon, come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: That generally is the practice right across this province. A quarter-of-a-billion-dollars increase this year; that amount is going to increase by \$750 million in additional funding for home and community care. We're seeing the results. There is transformation under way. Gail Donner and a team of experts are looking at home and community care to see how we can continue to improve the services. We're expecting their report in the new year, and I look forward to their recommendations.

CHILD ADVOCATE

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yesterday afternoon we had final hearings on Bill 8, the so-called transparency and accountability act—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Who is this for?

Ms. Catherine Fife: —I'm sorry: to Minister Matthews—a piece of legislation that in fact fails this province's most vulnerable children. Mr. Irwin Elman,

the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, told members of the committee how it fails. He told the story of a 10-year-old boy in a group home who was put in physical restraints 108 times in a 13-month period. Mr. Elman added: "It takes a great deal of courage for a child as vulnerable as those in my mandate to speak up. Those children, who with great strength come forward, often alone and frightened, have a right to expect my office has all the tools it needs to assist them."

Minister, you know that the NDP supports Mr. Elman's amendments to Bill 8. Will this government have the courage to help this province's most vulnerable children?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you to the member for asking a very important question.

We're actually meeting today with the provincial advocate to discuss his proposals and a number of recommendations under consideration right now. Let me just say, too, that the goals of the government are the same as the advocate's: that is, the best care and support for children in our province so that they can reach their full potential.

Bill 8, as the member knows, if passed, will give the provincial advocate new investigatory powers that have been modelled after other powers provided to the Ombudsman under the Ombudsman Act. So we do have the same goals: It is about child protection, safety and helping children reach their full potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The minister knows what authority the children's advocate needs and deserves. Mr. Elman has asked that he be given the power to investigate all children under his mandate. He has been asking for these changes year after year for the past six years.

Bill 8 still excludes young people involved with youth justice; mental health; development services; children's treatment centres; residential schools for deaf, blind and severely disabled children; as well as First Nations children and those with special needs. Right now, Ontario's children's advocate is the only independent officer of the Legislature and the only child advocate in the country that doesn't have these powers.

Why does this government continue to bring forward legislation that is designed to fail the children of this province?

1120

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We're very pleased with what is in Bill 8 right now to give that broader power to the advocate when it comes to child welfare. In addition, there are other accountability measures with the Children's Aid Society.

The member mentioned youth justice. We've also ensured that the Ombudsman has oversight of all of our youth justice facilities. I'm really looking forward to hearing the outcome of the meeting today with the provincial advocate as this bill moves forward.

I just want to say it was the third party, however, when given the chance, who shot this bill down. They didn't

want it to go forward. They refused to support the bill. Here we are, and we have brought it back, as the Premier promised. We brought the bill back as is, before the election, and now we're moving forward. I hope we'll have a good resolution.

As I said, the advocate does great work. We all share the same goal, which is the best interests of children in our province.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the ebullient Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Ontario's clean energy initiatives have attracted billions of dollars in new investments, generated more than 40,000 jobs and significantly increased the amount of clean energy generated throughout the province.

Our government's elimination of coal-fired electricity in Ontario is the number one greenhouse gas reduction initiative across North America. It represents the equivalent of taking seven million cars off the road. Moving away from burning fossil fuels and toward renewal energy is helping Ontario meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals, improves our air quality and is helping our economy grow toward low-carbon solutions that meet our needs.

Earlier this month, Health Canada released the results of a wind turbine noise study, and I'm sure the people of Ontario are very keen and interested in the results of that study. Would the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change please update the House on the findings of Health Canada regarding wind turbine noise and its effects on health?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much to my friend the member from Eaches—

Interjections: Beaches—East York.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Beaches—East York. I want to thank him for—

Interjection: We're just getting used to saying it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, exactly. It has been over a century since we Liberals have been able to say that with the enthusiasm that we can now say it.

I'm very appreciative for his advocacy. Closing coal plants was very important. But there have been a lot of misconceptions, I think, about wind turbines and their health impacts.

Our friends in Ottawa at Health Canada put out a study. I'd just like to actually read directly from their report: "Illness and chronic disease: No evidence was found to support a link between exposure to wind turbine noise and any of the self-reported illnesses ... and chronic conditions" like heart disease etc.

On the issue of stress, which was the second area we and the federal government were asking them to look at: "No association was found between ... multiple measures of stress"—and they list them.

I will continue in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Again, my question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I'm pleased to hear our government is moving forward with a science-based approach to renewable energy, and that Health Canada's study supports the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health's findings that there were no links in stress, chronic disease or sleep between wind turbine noises and these adverse health impacts.

It's important that Ontario continues its strong commitment to clean energy sources and moves us away from burning fossil fuels. I'm sure my constituents in Beaches–East York are pleased to know that there are alternative energy sources, such as wind, and that they are a safe, clean and sustainable way to meet our needs, and that a significant concern of those opposing wind turbines has been resolved.

Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment please share with the House why it's important that we continue moving Ontario towards safe and clean renewable energy?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's important for a lot of reasons, but I just want to finish with the health piece, because they went on to study sleep and a number of other matters. Health Canada, in every single case, found no link between wind turbines and any negative health effects in any of the areas.

It's particularly interesting, because claims have been made by members of the opposition that there were health issues. Now we know scientifically and clearly that that is not the case.

There are health issues with coal. There are health issues with transmission lines. There are health issues with all manner of things, but this is clean.

The other piece that's very important is, as Ontario right now is over 6% below its 1990 GHG levels, we're actually one of the world leaders now in meeting and exceeding global targets for GHG reductions. This is critical, not only for clean energy and the billions of investment dollars, but we couldn't get to our climate change goals without the wind sector, Mr. Speaker.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Minister, as you know, next week most of us will attend some inaugurals. Already I'm hearing difficult times are ahead for many of our municipalities: huge taxation increases because of policing, the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund dwindling away, and what is really hard to bear are the inequities and discrimination that municipalities receive when they apply for infrastructure programs.

It is clear that well-managed municipalities that actually have reserves set aside for specific projects have their applications rejected. I can give you many examples of that and I can give you letters to support that. Many of the mayors are saying, "Don't even send out the forms anymore," because all they are doing is wasting valuable time and money filling them out, only to be rejected over and over.

Minister, is it your intention to continue on this path, or will you begin to treat all municipal projects based on their merit and not on the good or bad management of the municipality?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, how do you answer a question like that? We have a great working relationship with municipalities, quite the departure, dare I say, from the previous government that downloaded many of the issues referenced in passing.

We're investing literally billions of dollars with respect to uploading some of those issues that the previous government downloaded. We're engaged with housing issues. We're engaged with ice storm assistance with the feds. We're insisting, as AMO would have us insist, that there be accountability mechanisms and priorities set with respect to all this funding. That's exactly what we're doing and will continue to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You know, Mr. Speaker, you never, ever get any kind of an answer.

Minister, we know that your government operates on the credit card that our great-grandchildren will be paying off. Are you expecting municipalities to do the same? Some municipalities actually do care about their finances. When all citizens of Ontario pay their provincial taxes, do you really think it is fair that well-managed municipalities and their ratepayers are discriminated against so that infrastructure grants can be directed to those that have mismanaged in the past? That's exactly what's happening. I don't know if you get it or not, but that's exactly what's happening.

Give the new councils some credit. Give some clarity on whether it actually pays to be efficient in this province as a municipality, because there's one thing we know for sure: We don't have a very efficient Liberal government.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Look, let's be perfectly frank about this. Municipalities, by and large—there's the odd exception where there's a need for some special assistance—are well managed. They work hard at ensuring that they are well managed. We work together in making sure that the joint programs we offer are transparent, accountable and well managed. I'm proud of our municipalities, all 444 of them across Ontario that struggle every single day to try to build stronger, healthier communities. We're pleased to be engaged in that process with them. We'll continue to be engaged.

I'm participating right now in our building bridges tour all across Ontario. I've visited and spoken directly with over 60 municipal councils. They appreciate that we're having that dialogue and we're making the kinds of changes to build stronger communities in Ontario.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Recently we learned, through a newspaper investigation in Hamilton, that the people of Ontario will never hear the results of an OPP probe of a botched murder investigation from many years ago. The reason? We

don't even know that, Speaker. And why don't we know? Because the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the day finally had to concede that she couldn't get the government to explain why they kept the probe's findings secret.

Does the Premier think that it's right that the Information and Privacy Commissioner, an independent officer of this Legislature, doesn't have the power to compel the government to provide information to the people of this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question. I think the member opposite very well knows that this is a matter that is before the courts right now, which is being actively considered and has been subject to several years of litigation. It would be highly inappropriate for myself, the Premier or any member of the government to comment on this matter.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a matter that the Information and Privacy Commissioner clearly stated should be open to the public. It's got nothing to do with the courts, and this government and this minister know that very, very well.

This case went all the way to the Supreme Court. One man went to jail for seven years, and another was actually deported. The original police investigation was found to have used illegal wiretaps, and the conviction was thrown out. Now, more than a decade later—a decade and a half, almost—this government still won't release the results of the probe into what went wrong. They won't even explain why they refuse to tell us.

How can the openness-and-transparency Premier ignore orders from her own Information and Privacy Commissioner, her own watchdog?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I mentioned earlier, this is an issue that is very much before the courts. It would be highly inappropriate for any member of the government to comment on that.

We know that our police officers do extremely hard work, and we thank them for the work that they do. In respect to the release of the report, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is very much committed to fully complying with the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and we'll comply with the ruling of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

But, as this matter is still subject to ongoing legal proceedings, it would not be appropriate to get into any further details.

SKILLED TRADES

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, skilled tradespeople are vital to Ontario's economy. Our government established the Ontario College of Trades to

give tradespeople and industry responsibility for regulating the skilled trades for the first time.

In just over a year and a half of operation, the college has had a number of important successes as it fulfills its mandate to protect the public by regulating and promoting the skilled trades. For the first time, Ontarians can access a public register to view the credentials of professionals working in the skilled trades.

Constituents in my riding of Davenport are pleased that they can rely on the public register to ensure that the skilled tradespeople they hire, especially in compulsory trades, have the appropriate qualifications.

Minister, can you inform the members of the House how the College of Trades is regulating and promoting the skilled trades and supporting the highly skilled workers we need here in Ontario?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Davenport for that question. The Ontario College of Trades has taken vital steps to regulate, modernize and promote the skilled trades in Ontario. The college has helped to promote careers in the trades as first-choice professions for our students, and is also doing important work to protect the public through the public registry.

Since its inception, the college has done a review of all 33 apprenticeship ratios, reducing 14 of these ratios. The college has put the skilled trades on a similar footing with teachers, doctors, dentists and nurses, who all have their own professional regulatory bodies. Our government believes that decisions regarding the skilled trades in Ontario should be made by industry and tradespeople themselves, not by politicians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I'm pleased to hear that the Ontario College of Trades has had some very important successes since its launch.

Minister, I understand that, after hearing the advice of industry leaders and tradespeople, our government has appointed Mr. Tony Dean to review some aspects of the College of Trades' work. I know that our government made a commitment to undertake this review, and I'm happy to hear that we have appointed such a highly qualified person.

Many of my constituents in Davenport are members of the Ontario College of Trades, and are interested in understanding his role in greater depth. Minister, can you update the members of the House on what Mr. Dean's role will be and how his review will support the continued success of the college?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member again for that question. To support the continued success of the college, our government has appointed Tony Dean to the role of reviewer. His job is to examine the trade classification review process and issues related to the scope of practice of trades, including their connection to enforcement.

Our government fully supports tradespeople. That's why we have asked Mr. Dean to conduct this review of

specific activities of the college. Mr. Dean's appointment has been welcomed by a diverse range of industry groups, and there is broad agreement that he is well qualified to address these issues.

It will continue to be a priority for our government to ensure that the College of Trades can carry out its mandate as effectively as possible.

CHRISTMAS TREE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, earlier this year I reintroduced An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day. If passed, this legislation will designate the first Saturday in December of each year as Christmas Tree Day in Ontario.

The US has deemed the entire first week of December as National Christmas Tree Week. This effort has boosted Christmas tree sales considerably across the United States.

Premier, the Christmas tree industry employs thousands of workers in the farming, transportation and retail sectors. More than one million fresh, farm-grown Christmas trees are purchased each year in Ontario, and the same number of seedlings are planted each year. There are 647 Christmas tree farms in Ontario, more than in any other province.

Premier, in recognition of a rural industry that our province benefits greatly from, will you agree to unanimous consent of my bill and make Christmas Tree Day a reality?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure is going to want to speak to this.

I just want to say that I think that anything we can do to support the Christmas tree industry—I can remember, as a young mom, we would take our kids to Horton Tree Farms—I'm not sure whose riding Horton Tree Farms is in.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Horton Tree Farms; there you go—to cut down a tree. I think it's a terrific tradition, part of the season for people who celebrate Christmas.

I would be happy to follow up with the Leader of the Opposition. I know the minister of Economic Development will have something to say about this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, I'm not sure what to take of that answer—whether it was a yes or a no. I'll just indicate that after question period—Mr. Speaker, with your permission—I'm going to ask for unanimous consent. The first Saturday of December comes very soon.

This gives the industry an opportunity to encourage more consumers to buy Christmas trees. We should know that the industry points out the environmental benefits of Christmas trees—one acre of trees removes up to 13 tonnes of airborne pollutants—so we need to encourage this industry.

I hope people aren't grinch over there or over there, and that you'll join us in supporting this very, very important industry today.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm waiting for my Christmas tree note to come, and it doesn't seem to be coming.

But I can tell you this—and I may have a bit of a conflict here. I have family in the Collingwood area, who may well be your constituents, who are in this line of work, who do farm Christmas trees. I don't know if they're still doing it, but they were years ago.

It is an important sector. I think the member raises a valid concern. In the area he represents, this is an important industry and something that I think all Ontarians can embrace.

Let me take this time to wish everybody in this House a merry Christmas and encourage everyone to get their Christmas trees up. I know we're busy. Get to it. Get those Christmas lights up. Let's get it in the spirit.

I thank the member for bringing this to our attention.

HOME CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, earlier this month, when I asked the Minister of Health about the CCAC slashing its services, he stated that it just isn't true. Earlier this week, he described these service cuts to home care in Windsor as no cuts at all.

But this weekend, in my riding, I will be meeting with more home care patients and their families who have been hit by these service cuts, just as I have done this entire month—people like Betty Terry, who is 89 and suffers from dementia; and Madelyn Reitzel, who is 89 and has suffered from a stroke and needs constant care.

With nursing visits slashed by one third, my constituents are being left without the care they need. They are told these service cuts are myths.

1140

Will the minister finally do the right thing, admit that these service cuts are real and apologize to the people of Windsor for saying the exact opposite?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. My job as the Minister of Health is to ensure that those individuals across the province who do need care are provided with that care. We're doing that in home and community care as well.

In Windsor, in Erie St. Clair, we're not changing the criteria, nor will anyone have a change in their services unless their objective assessment indicates that they require a change in their services. Sometimes that's an increase in services, Mr. Speaker, and sometimes that's a decrease in services. But it's made by our care coordinators, our health care professionals, in a very objective way through assessment.

In Erie St. Clair, there is no wait-list for nursing care. There is no wait-list for PSW care through our CCACs. Everyone needing home care in Erie St. Clair is getting home care. That policy is not changing. We're adding additional funds, as I've mentioned before, to be able to accommodate any increases—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a quote from the First Vice-President with the ONA. She states, "I don't know whether he needs to come and see, whether he needs to talk to people whose services have been cut ... I don't know how" the minister "can say there are no cuts...."

There is absolutely no excuse to cut home care services in Windsor and no excuse for the minister to bury his head in the sand. These service cuts are spelled out in the CCAC memos, and patients are feeling the effects each and every day.

If the minister really thinks that there are no service cuts to home care in Windsor, he needs to order that the home care services that have already been reduced be fully restored immediately. So why does the minister continue to deny that these shocking service cuts—not funding; service cuts—to home care are happening under his watch?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Yesterday, I had the opportunity to speak both with the CEO of the CCAC in Erie St. Clair, as well as with the CEO of the LHIN that has responsibility, and they're working together. In fact, there's an open board meeting today at the LHIN. The CCAC CEO is going to present.

I look forward to the member opposite, frankly any members in this Legislature, if they have specific examples, specific individuals who they feel are not receiving the care that they're entitled to, I expect them—I in fact believe they have a responsibility to bring those specific cases to my attention. The third party has not done that in any specific example of bringing—their responsibility to bring those people to my attention. I look forward to hearing from them.

I would suggest that they follow the lead, as well, of the member from Sarnia-Lambton, who is working with our LHIN, working with our CCAC. It's their LHIN, their CCAC, and there are meetings taking place—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills on a point of order.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, a point of order: I will now present a petition of right to the Attorney General.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's not a point of order. All members have a right to walk any document back and forth between each other, and that's an acceptable practice.

The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent that the orders for second and third reading of Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day, be called immediately and that the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bill be put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson is seeking unanimous consent that the orders for second and third reading of Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —be called immediately and that the question on the motions for second and third reading of the bill be put immediately without debate or amendment. Do we agree? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Order.

As is the tradition and the convention in this place, our guests are always welcome to be here, but I would have to announce to you very clearly that you cannot do any demonstration whatsoever. I would appreciate it if you could follow the convention. We still welcome you to be here, under those rules. I appreciate that.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats.

On November 26, Mr. Bradley moved government notice of motion number 10. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Yates

Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Meilleur, Madeleine
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Murray, Glen R.
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Naqvi, Yasir
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Oraziotti, David
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Potts, Arthur
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Sousa, Charles
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Sattler, Peggy
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Singh, Jagmeet
Bisson, Gilles	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.

Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Gretzky, Lisa
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael

McDonnell, Jim
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick

Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 40.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1153 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Han Dong: Speaker, it's my pleasure to welcome three strong advocates from my great riding of Trinity-Spadina: Mr. Tim Maxwell, Mr. Kevin Lee and Mr. Gary Newhouse. They do good work helping the vulnerable in my riding justice and fairness. Welcome.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't like to repeat myself, but there were many members and guests who were late getting here this morning that I wasn't able to mention. They're coming in now, or are here now, from Goderich township, Huron county and across Ontario, mostly members of the Ontario Landowners Association, to witness the petition of right being delivered to the Attorney General this morning, which was a wonderful historic privilege for all of us, and for these people. I say welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent of the House today that I be privileged to wear this green ribbon on my shirt as I speak to my motion on an Ontario Lyme disease strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Algoma-Manitoulin is seeking unanimous consent to wear a green ribbon for his statement. Do we agree? Agreed.

I guess there's a typical question we tend to ask; that is, are the ribbons available for all members of the House, and if not, is this specific to your statement? I just need clarity for that.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I will make them available for everybody in the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll make sure the House leaders are aware of that, and we'll put them where they're supposed to be so that they can support as well.

Further introductions? The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Now my friends have some work to do with some ribbons.

I'd like to introduce my friends here today. I would like to recognize the Ontario Lyme Alliance, CanLyme, York North Lyme group, Hamilton Lyme group, the G. Magnotta Foundation for Vector-Borne Diseases. Please help me to welcome them to Queen's Park as we address the issue of Lyme disease. They're all here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

HAMILTON TIGER-CATS FOOTBALL CAP

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I rise on a point of order, if I could, to seek unanimous consent to have the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek's Hamilton Tiger-Cats cap placed on his desk for the duration of the afternoon session.

As you know, Speaker, the member is away at his daughter's wedding, but we know he would want to be wearing his cap and seeking unanimous consent to do that, had he been here. We're hoping the Tiger-Cats bring the Grey Cup back to Ontario on Sunday, so I'd like to seek unanimous consent to put his cap on his desk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I might even classify that as half of a statement, but that's not the problem. The problem is that I need to seek unanimous consent for the Tiger-Cats hat to be placed on the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek's desk until after Sunday, when they win the Grey Cup.

Do I have agreement? Agreed. Proceed.

It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GODERICH TOWNSHIP

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, this is about the petition of right, which has been our topic today, and for the people who are here as guests to see this done.

The property owners of Goderich township want to de-amalgamate from the amalgamated municipality of Central Huron in Huron county. They have chosen the Petition of Right, an ancient law from 1628, as the instrument to restore their right to determine their own self-governance.

The property owners of Goderich township pay about 60% of the total property tax bill for the amalgamated township of Central Huron, but none of this money is spent on capital projects in Goderich township.

The people of Goderich township are unhappy and they want out. The Petition of Right of 1628 was used by the common people to have the King or Parliament correct a wrong. The people would take a petition signed by a legal majority of the people that defined the wrong and defined what right should be done and presented this Petition of Right to the King or Parliament, and the King or Parliament was bound to say, "Let right be done."

This was the law then; this is the law now. So I say to this House, the crown and the people of Goderich, "Let right be done."

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet again, we approach that season where we have lots of snow coming down on our highways across the province of Ontario and people are starting to be concerned about the conditions of the roads.

I appreciate and respect that the government has tried to move somewhat on this issue by increasing the number of plows that are on our highways, but we all know that we're still about 400 plows short to what we used to have when MTO was responsible for plowing our highways. That means that highways in your communities, highways in my communities and across this province are being plowed at a less frequent rate than they were before. I, yet again, got phone calls this morning in my constituency office in regard to the condition of our roads. People are recognizing that the roads are not being maintained to the degree they used to be before.

I have a very simple point that I want to make here and a very simple request that I want to make to the minister. Our roads are in worse condition than they have ever been before, and we're calling on this government to do the right thing. You've got to do two things: You've got to include, inside the current area maintenance contracts, the circuit times that used to be in those contracts before and allowed our roads to be in a better condition as far as plowing, and we need to increase the amount of equipment that we're using on our highways to make sure the highways across this province are safe for everyone to travel.

LOCAL FOOD

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's an honour for me to speak today about an outstanding restaurant in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. The Social Bar and Table in Port Hope has been designated by the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance's Feast ON program. This designation is awarded to applicants who purchase at least 25% of their food and beverages from Ontario producers. They must also commit to participate in local food events and partner with local food and beverage providers.

The Social Bar and Table buys over 55% of their products from Ontario suppliers. I'm thrilled that they are one of five restaurants chosen to participate today at Queen's Park at the 2014 Premier's Summit on Agri-Food. The Social Bar and Table will be showcasing local products from Linwood Acres Trout Farm, Burnham Family Farm apples and North Gate Organics produce.

Please take time to stop by the agri-food summit reception later on this afternoon downstairs, which focuses on Ontario's finest producers and demonstrates how important it is to buy local and know where our products are coming from.

The Social Bar and Table is located at 26 Ontario Street in Port Hope. Please stop by when you're in the riding.

And don't forget: Good things grow in Ontario.

FILIPINO CHINESE COMMUNITY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm delighted to rise today to congratulate the Federation of Philippine Chinese in Ontario on celebrating their 25th anniversary. This is a non-profit organization that works tirelessly on behalf of the Filipino Chinese community with the goal of preserving their unique traditions while putting down roots here in our province. They promote wonderful cultural and recreational events throughout the province, including holiday traditions, sport leagues and youth events. They also offer support to new Canadians, assisting with communication and socialization and helping them to integrate into their new communities.

I was lucky enough to attend the Moon Festival celebrations held by the FPCO in September. I was blown away by what a vibrant and engaged community they have and by the warm welcome I received.

1310

Tomorrow night, they will be celebrating their 25th anniversary with a Christmas party, so I want to join with the friends and supporters of the FPCO in commending the dedicated service which has built and sustained a thriving community environment for the Filipino Chinese in Ontario. Again, congratulations on a milestone anniversary. I'm sure it's just one milestone of many to come.

SPORTS IN HAMILTON

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm always proud to stand in this House and have the opportunity which not many are able to enjoy. I have to say I'm thankful to be standing here today to speak about the wonderful city that I live in and also enjoy.

I'm a proud Hamiltonian and I, quite frankly, have been my entire life. I have always been the person to jump at the chance to support a city gathering, a parade or the torch run through my city. I have always been eager to show up at the rallies or engagements that showcase our city and cheer on our teams.

Speaker, as you're aware, Hamilton was very successful last weekend. The McMaster Marauders won the Mitchell Bowl, sending them to this Saturday's Vanier Cup, where they will face the University of Montreal. The Marauders were Vanier Cup champions in 2011, finalists in 2012, and I know they're looking forward to bringing that victory home this year.

Then there are our Tiger-Cats. I have to say I'm rallied, I'm excited and I am so looking forward to Sunday's game. On Saturday we won the eastern final and on Sunday we will be playing in the 102nd Grey Cup.

I've been attending the games since I was a child. I remember being a little kid, sitting in the stands with my family and watching the game. This season has been no

different. I did my best to be at as many games as I could. My brother and I are both season ticket holders, and many a game we shared, bringing our dad or our nephew, or just spending time with our spouses at the games. Whoever I was with was okay with me, as long as I was cheering on my team and having a good time, rain or shine.

I can't believe I'm out of time already, but I just have to say Go, Cats, Go! Oskee Wee Wee! Hamilton will be cheering you on, and I know you're going to bring it home.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Far be it from me to cut off "Oskee Wee Wee."

The member for Burlington

CENTRE FOR EQUITABLE LIBRARY ACCESS

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Mr. Speaker, Oskee Wee Wee indeed.

I rise in the House today to recognize the extraordinary work of the Burlington Public Library and in particular a wonderful organization that I had the privilege of learning about when I toured our library recently, the Centre for Equitable Library Access.

The CELA is a national not-for-profit organization established by Canadian public libraries to provide equitable public library services for Canadians with print disabilities. Our Burlington Public Library is a member of this wonderful national organization, providing print-disabled residents in my riding of Burlington with access to published material in accessible formats.

The inability to hold or manipulate a book, an impairment to reading comprehension, severe or total impairment of sight or the inability to focus or move one's eyes are a few examples of disabilities that prevent print-disabled residents from accessing conventional print.

For the 10% of Canadians who have a print disability, access to reading materials in alternative formats, such as Braille, audio or described video, is often an ongoing challenge. With help from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, digital accessible formats of published material are being produced for visually impaired and print-disabled residents; and my public library is serving as an access point.

The Centre for Equitable Library Access makes it possible for print-disabled residents to gain easy access to a wealth of published materials in formats of their choice, right in their own communities, through their public library.

Speaker, I'm so pleased to stand in my place today and salute our Burlington Public Library for this wonderful and enjoyable and accessible program.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today is a good day when we celebrate excellence in Ontario's agri-food industry, but I'd also like to remind the House that earlier this year

the Premier challenged this very same industry to double its growth rate and create 120,000 new jobs by 2020.

Years ago, when I was vice-chair of Ontario Agri-Food Education, Lorie Jocius, the current chair, projected that Ontario's agri-food industry would have jobs without people. Sadly, that's our reality today.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the University of Guelph as well as Food and Beverage Ontario for recently announcing their action plan to address this. Indeed, a new generation must be interested and enthused to pursue post-secondary education focused on primary agriculture and the agri-food sector. But the question is, when should this interest be fostered?

The industry has already indicated that the current number of students in post-secondary education will not meet their future employment needs, and educational stakeholders are telling me some of their programs are going not completely filled. This all indicates that we need to promote careers in Ontario's agri-food sector to youth in a timely manner.

I would suggest, Speaker, that you will find on the order paper today that I've introduced a resolution that would encourage the government to include a mandatory agri-food component of career opportunities in the grades 9 and 10 guidance and career education curriculum.

By supporting Ontario Agri-Food Education, the industry at large has already invested in educational material. Now it's time to put it to use.

WE DAY

Ms. Daiene Vernile: A week ago, 7,000 young people crammed into the Kitchener Memorial Auditorium. There was music; there was a glitzy light show and a lineup of famous people. But this was more than just a rock concert; Kitchener hosted We Day. It's a day long event that encourages young people to care about global issues. The elementary and high school students who were invited to the event all helped to raise funds for Free the Children, and this was their reward. Since 2007, young people across Canada have raised \$45 million for more than 1,000 local and global causes.

Captain Richard Phillips, who was portrayed by Tom Hanks in the movie about the 2009 hijacking of his ship, told the students that attitude will always impact results. I had a chance to see this in action a few years ago when I visited a camp in west Kenya while producing a TV documentary on a group of high school students from my region. After fundraising for two years, they travelled to this remote area and they helped build a school. They installed a water collection project and they were there to learn practical ways to mitigate poverty and hunger. They built the school, and they provided young people there with a very positive and good change for them.

We Day is more than just a one-day event. The messages that they hear empower them to find their passion and to live by example the kinds of changes that they want to see in this world.

COMMUNITY CENTRE

1320

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm rising today to showcase a fantastic organization in my riding of Davenport.

Every day, I'm struck by the generosity of our fellow citizens, and nowhere is that generosity of character more apparent than at the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre. For nearly 30 years, the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre has tirelessly worked to promote the health and social well-being of the west Toronto community with a broad range of programming. From the preschool program and other services at the Ontario Early Years Centre to the Youth Leadership Project for teenagers, all the way to computer training for seniors, the centre really provides something for everyone, and these programs make a huge difference in the lives of my constituents.

The centre's new HERE4YOUth initiative launched last week. It will fit right in among the roster of fantastic services. HERE4YOUth is a youth-led program that aims to empower young people between the ages of 13 and 24 in the west Toronto area. A team of young researchers are engaging their peers through a number of means in order to figure out what prevents the city's youth from accessing sexual and mental health services. It's an important question, and HERE4YOUth is a great program model. The initiative, which was funded by an Ontario Trillium grant, not only explores a pressing question but also offers a chance for young people to develop their research and community engagement skills.

Last week, I was delighted to attend the HERE4YOUth community fair at the Davenport-Perth centre, and I'm happy to report that it was a successful evening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON ESTIMATES

Miss Monique Taylor: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Pursuant to the order of the House dated July 24, 2014, Miss Taylor from the Standing Committee on Estimates reports the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015:

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport: vote 3801, ministry administration—

Miss Monique Taylor: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 63(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the committee will be placed on the Orders and Notices paper.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(SCHOOL BUS
CAMERA SYSTEM), 2014
LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(SYSTÈME PHOTOGRAPHIQUE
RELIÉ AUX AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES)

Mr. Nicholls moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 50, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act /
Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant le Code de la route.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: This bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to add a new part respecting school bus camera systems. Subsections 175(11) and (12) of the Highway Traffic Act set out certain requirements that apply when a vehicle encounters a school bus on a highway. The new part provides that a photograph of a vehicle obtained from a school bus camera system may be received as evidence in a proceeding under the Provincial Offences Act respecting an alleged offence under subsection 175(11) or (12).

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Hon. Michael Chan: Before I start my remarks, I want to acknowledge some very important people in the House. Some of them just left. I had a big delegation of students from Parkland Public School, but unfortunately they left just moments ago. But there are other important people here. It's my wonderful staff. Without them, this bill would not be possible.

Speaker, I want to acknowledge my deputy, Chisanga Puta-Chekwe; my ADM, Marsha Barnes; and Katrina, Larissa, Akbar, Nick, James and Alice. Thank you for being here today.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the legislation that was introduced yesterday to make immigration work better for Ontario and for newcomers. Ontario has relied upon immigrants from its earliest beginnings. We continue to do so today. But we need to make some changes so that immigration continues to work for us long into the future. I'm proud to have reintroduced the Ontario Immigration Act for the consideration of this House.

As we all know, Speaker, a very similar proposal was introduced last spring, but the House was dissolved

before it was passed. We have brought it forward again, because immigration is important to our future prosperity and to our social fabric.

One study forecasts that there will be more than 2.5 million job openings in the province over the next 10 years, most of them requiring high-skilled workers. Our homegrown talent in Ontario will not be able to meet this number. We will need skilled immigrants to help us fill those jobs and keep the economy growing.

Speaker, an important part of Ontario's economy is trade. It's one of the many areas where our diversity is a strength. Newcomers bring international connections and networks that drive economic growth. The more immigrants we have, the more we can tap into new markets. And the more we trade, the more jobs we create. It's as simple as that. This natural connection between trade and immigration is why the Premier appointed me as Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

Our proposed legislation is very, very important. We need to act now to ensure that immigrants continue to bring their skills and talents here.

Two years ago this month, our government announced Ontario's first-ever immigration strategy. Now we are taking the next step by introducing the Ontario Immigration Act. If passed, Ontario would be only the second province or territory in the country to have its own immigration legislation.

This proposed legislation would help us achieve three goals. First, it would help Ontario's work with the federal government on recruitment, selection and admission of skilled immigrants. Second, it would help strengthen our ongoing efforts to reduce fraud and detect misrepresentation, and it would help protect the integrity of our immigrant selection program and improve accountability. Finally, it would increase transparency and enhance information-sharing with our immigration partners, including all levels of government.

Speaker, I believe Ontario is the best place for immigrants to find success. Millions already have. But we must continue to put out the welcome mat, and we have to help immigrants succeed once they arrive here.

Two years ago, our government decided to take immigration in a new direction. Today we are taking another vital step in this new direction, to keep Ontario strong, to keep Ontario prosperous and to keep our province moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is an honour to stand here today and respond to the minister's statement.

Many of us here have heard a good deal of debate on this specific piece of legislation already. The Ontario Immigration Act was debated, as the minister said, as Bill 161 through February, March and April of this year. As I understand it, not many changes have been made to the bill, but there were a couple of changes. The basic intention is still to increase the proportion of economic-class immigrants to the province, to deter immigration fraud

and to allow new Canadians to practise in their chosen professions whenever possible.

Ontario has always taken pride in its diversity, in not only welcoming immigrants but in being the first choice for new Canadians. They enriched our culture and brought prosperity because we provided them with opportunity. But sadly, when we talk about this symbiotic relationship, it's starting to sound a bit like we're talking about the good old days rather than about our present. Ontario doesn't offer the same kind of opportunities that it once did, and people just aren't choosing to make Ontario their new home as often as they did in the past.

As economic development critic, I stood in this House month after month to talk about how Ontario's unemployment numbers were below the national average, which they were for 93 consecutive months. As the new critic for citizenship, immigration and international trade, I have a new set of statistics to study, but they really reflect the same trend. This is data that has been brought to the government's attention before, but it bears repeating. Ontario had the lowest percentage of economic immigration in Canada in 2013, about 46%. That's over 20% lower than the national average. Overall, Ontario has about 20% fewer new Canadians choosing to live here than it did only 10 years ago.

You can't blame new Canadians for choosing to head west these days, because average weekly wages are lower here in Ontario, and our unemployment rate for very recent immigrants is the second-highest in all of Canada.

It's obviously a good idea to try to increase economic immigration, but it seems to me that many of the challenges we face here are symptoms of a poor economy. I'd like to see the government address not only the symptoms, but the root cause as well. On top of our obvious economic challenges, we have an aging population and a declining birth rate, as well as significant numbers of young people leaving Ontario to head west.

Our future is very much tied to new Canadians and the ability to attract new Canadians. If we want people to come here and to stay in Ontario, to start families and to put down roots, we need to give them a good reason. We need to start turning things around and making it possible for people to envision a bright future for themselves and their families here in Ontario.

We need to focus not only on attracting new Canadians but also on retaining these hard-working and talented people. We can bring people to Ontario, but it doesn't guarantee they will stay if better opportunities exist in other provinces. If we want spots allocated to fit the province's economic needs, then we need to show that provincial nominee program applicants stay here. The federal government won't allocate more spaces if we're not using what we already have.

1330

There are many aspirational elements to this bill that are subject to federal approval, like selection programs and target levels. Negotiation and communication with the federal government has presented some challenges for this particular government in the past, which causes

me some concern about how productive discussions will be and if measures in this bill will be able to move forward in a timely way. So it remains to be seen what this act will be able to do in practice if it does receive approval from this House. We also have new federal legislation coming into effect, or it has come into effect, which will obviously change some of the context here.

I do want to conclude by applauding the government for introducing legislation, because it's clear that there are specific problems that need to be addressed, and in this bill some of those issues will be addressed, as I mentioned in the beginning. I look forward to studying and debating this bill to find out if it has the solutions that Ontario's immigration system needs.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to my friend the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration's new piece of legislation entitled the Ontario Immigration Act.

Speaker, as you may know, the Windsor–Tecumseh region is home to—the area of the province third for the number of immigrants who come from other areas. In fact, we have more than 100 languages spoken in the homes of the students who come to our schools in Windsor–Tecumseh.

This legislation isn't quite new. As we know, the government has introduced it previously, yet it has never made it to royal assent. And although I'm going to be critical of some parts of the bill, I want to thank the minister and his staff for finally taking action on immigration matters. Thank you, sir.

We absolutely support fairness in immigration. On behalf of the NDP caucus, let me repeat: We absolutely support fairness in immigration. However, I caution the government that if they want to control immigration in this province, that means taking responsibility as well. We can no longer afford to simply point blame at our federal counterparts; we must take the lead on immigration in this province and ensure that we are protecting those who need it, especially our migrant workers.

Frankly, it's about time that Ontario had some immigration policy on the books, given that we are one of the last jurisdictions in Canada to do so. For 41 years, Quebec has been choosing its own immigrants, since they signed their accord in 1973. Today, we are seeing the Ontario government signal their intention to do what Quebec has done for all these years. The British North America Act, section 95, sets out that there's a dual jurisdiction for immigration and for agriculture, and yet Ontario has shirked its responsibilities for choosing immigrants and settling immigrants.

We need to look to other jurisdictions, because not only has Quebec done a better job than Ontario, but so have British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and even Prince Edward Island. Finally, Ontario is getting on-board. It's a timid getting on-board, I have to admit. We take on more than 125,000 immigrants a year, and we're saying that a percentage of those are now going to be chosen, in part, by the province of Ontario.

Sadly, there are many things here in the act that cause our party some grief. Sadly, there's a whole emphasis on

compliance and enforcement and those who fraudulently accept immigration to Canada. The number of people who fraudulently gain entry to our country is less than half of 1%—less than half of 1%—and I believe that Ontario ought not to be going down that path. Are there people who cheat the system? Absolutely, Speaker. Are the numbers large? No.

Control of immigration in this province should also mean an end to all harassment of undocumented workers that we saw last summer, workers who were pulled from their cars and had to show documentation. It means getting out of the detention business and seeking ways to work with undocumented workers who are more than capable of making real contributions to our society. We must stop this process of locking away those undocumented workers indefinitely and find ways to include everyone who wants to make this province their home.

This bill is virtually unchanged from a previous version and thereby runs the risk of continuing to fail Ontario's migrant workers, in particular. My party and I believe that migrant workers should be granted full immigration status and have access to benefits.

Much has been said highlighting what is happening here. I want to say that we need to do the kind of job that Quebec has done for 41 years. We need to assess the immigrants while they are still in their home countries. We need to assess them and tell them what kind of opportunities are here, and also what kind of upgrades they are going to need and that they can undertake while they are there, before they come, or what they are going to need when they get here. It's only fair.

It's unfair to individuals and to other countries to take their best and brightest doctors, engineers, nurses and everybody upon whom they rely and bring them here to a place where they cannot practise their profession. We have too many people with PhDs or MDs driving cabs, taking people back and forth to the airport, instead of practising what they've been trained to do.

So that's one thing that should be improved. We have to do more for the people who are coming here. I look forward to working with this government and with this minister on this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I approve of this petition. I affix my name to it and give it to page Kelsey.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: Here's a good petition, Mr. Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

"Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

"Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

"Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In doing so, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year."

I wholeheartedly support this petition and present it to page Ethan to bring down to the table and the Clerks.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Han Dong: On behalf of Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services, I'd like to present to the Legislative Assembly a petition concerning the transformation of community legal services in Toronto as follows:

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Attorney General of Ontario and Legal Aid Ontario to require the GTA legal clinic transformation project to develop a new vision for community legal services and draft a new proposal that has been created through genuine consultation with low-income communities, clients and front-line staff of all clinics as well as all members of the clinic boards over the course of the next 18 to 24 months."

I support this petition, and I give it to page Nicole.

1340

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Recognizing there are a number of people in the gallery who are negatively impacted by industrial wind turbines, and that we still get hundreds and hundreds and thousands of signatures, I am pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"In light of the many wide-ranging concerns being raised by Ontario citizens and 80-plus action groups across Ontario and the irrefutable international evidence of a flawed technology, health concerns, environmental effects, bird and bat kills, property losses, the tearing apart of families, friends and communities, and unprecedented costs;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to declare an Ontario"—I'll say that again, because it's very important. "We ... ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to declare an Ontario-wide moratorium on the development of wind farms."

I totally agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Nick.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to Vida to bring down to the Clerks.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is committed to providing the right care, at the right place, at the right time, and by the right health care professional; and

"Whereas patients that are not satisfied with their care deserve the opportunity to voice their concerns and seek resolutions to their complaints; and

"Whereas patients sometimes need a third party to turn to when they have exhausted all local complaint resolution processes; and

"Whereas a patient ombudsman would facilitate the resolution of complaints, investigate health sector organizations, and make recommendations to further strengthen Ontario's health care sector;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 8, and create a patient ombudsman."

I fully support the petition, and I give my petition to page Johann.

GODERICH TOWNSHIP

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Goderich township was formerly a thriving and independent community before forced amalgamation;

"Whereas the taxpayers of Goderich township have suffered an inequitable burden since forced amalgamation;

"Whereas Goderich township is financially secure, independent and self-sufficient;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to de-amalgamate Goderich township from the municipality of Central Huron;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Reinstate the municipality of Goderich township to its former status with all rights, privileges and duties formerly held therein."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Kelsey.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition signed by people from right across Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

"Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

I agree 100% with this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Albany to take up to the desk, as soon as the member opposite gives me the pen he just borrowed from me.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I agree with this petition and will affix my name and give it to page Joshua.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Toby Barrett: "Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many

catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I affix my signature with the rest of them.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and will take the pen that I borrowed from my colleague—and present it to page Mikaila to bring down to the Clerks.

1350

LEGAL AID

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I do have a petition here.

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Population-based legal services funding.

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the 2012-13 budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I will sign this petition and send it to the desk with Steven.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Toby Barrett: I received petitions just a few days ago in my office in Dunnville. These are part of 1,600 names.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

"Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I support this petition.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

LYME DISEASE

MALADIE DE LYME

Mr. Michael Mantha: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should develop a comprehensive and integrated Lyme disease strategy for Ontario that is consistent and

integrated with the Action Plan on Lyme Disease being developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada;

That the strategy must enhance public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario and ensure that all scientifically verified tests and treatment for acute and chronic Lyme diagnoses are available to patients and health care practitioners in Ontario;

That in developing this strategy, the minister should recognize the impact that Lyme disease has on individuals and families across Ontario and focus on addressing access to care issues faced by people at every stage of the disease;

That in developing this strategy, the minister should:

—Consider the availability of current laboratory tests and protocols to support clinical diagnoses, and specifically the efficacy of currently available diagnostic mechanisms in Ontario compared to other jurisdictions;

—Evaluate the publicly funded services and treatments available to Ontarians, with a view to improving the availability and accessibility of effective services and treatments within the province to provide optimal patient outcomes;

—Recognize the importance of health promotion, disease prevention, and early intervention in the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease;

—Consider the role of the government of Ontario and local public health agencies in conducting tick surveillance and tabulating case numbers of Lyme disease; and

—Include any related issues that, in the view of the minister, deserve or require consideration.

That in developing this strategy, the minister should engage and consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups, including the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, the Ontario Lyme Alliance, the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation, international scientific advisers and medical experts in the field of tick-borne diseases having diverse perspectives, workers' organizations and veterinary associations, amongst others, and accept written submissions from Ontarians; and

That the minister should table the Lyme disease strategy in the House by no later than one year after the passage of this motion.

I so move.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Mantha has moved private members' notice of motion number 13. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I rise today to introduce a motion titled "Motion on Ontario Lyme disease strategy." I choose to put my private member's spot to speak on this topic and introduce this motion due to the overwhelming number of people who have come forward to express their concern on Lyme disease.

People in the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin and across this province are alarmed at the increasing infection rates of Lyme disease, people like Ona and Oliver Maki from Elliot Lake; a beautiful young girl, Kari, whose father I

was introduced to, Denis Villebrun from Elliot Lake; Cherie Prieur and her wonderful son Nolan, who I was introduced to through her mother, Rachel Paterson; and my wonderful extended family that has joined me here today in the battle, in the strategy, with Lyme. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to our many, many, discussions that we're going to have on this.

Lyme disease is a serious bacterial infection acquired by tick bite. Ticks are closely related to the spider family, and many of you may know them more commonly as deer ticks. Ticks carry bacteria which is a type of spirochete, and they feed on the blood by attaching themselves to birds, animals and humans. So when a tick bites one of us, we end up infected with Lyme disease.

Currently, there are eight known endemic areas in the province, and the risk of infection is increasing at an estimated rate of 33 to 55 kilometres per year. This is directly related to climate change. In Ontario, the highest-risk zones are along the shores of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. The Kingston and eastern Ontario public health units have declared their regions as high-risk. However, just yesterday in Toronto, Durham and York health units issued an advisory about Lyme disease. Public health units in the municipalities have recently found evidence that black-legged ticks are in the Rouge Valley and that some of these ticks tested positive for the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.

Almost anywhere, infected ticks arrive in Ontario on birds and can be dispersed along their migratory routes. The Public Health Agency of Canada has forecast that by the end of 2020, 80% of people in eastern Canada, including Ontario, will be living in areas endemic for ticks that transmit Lyme disease.

So many of you are here thinking that you are all not at risk of infection. Do you own a dog? Do you have a cat? Do you enjoy walking? Do you enjoy golfing? Well, you are at risk. People who spend time outdoors, working, hiking, camping, playing sports and hunting, are all at risk. We all need to be aware of the dangers and how serious Lyme disease can be if undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. Lack of public awareness puts us all at risk of contracting Lyme. Outdated and incomplete information continues to circulate and dominate the discourse of Lyme. Ontario continues to rely on testing methods that Health Canada says are unreliable. If left undiagnosed and therefore untreated, Lyme can mimic other diseases, such as ALS, MS, lupus, just to name a few, and a lot more.

For all of the abovementioned reasons, it is imperative that we work together to come up with a comprehensive plan to address these shortcomings and create a strategy that prevents the spread of Lyme disease and properly diagnoses the threats to those infected.

1400

For these reasons, I am introducing this motion for an Ontario Lyme disease strategy. As I mentioned previously, this motion will enhance public awareness of Lyme in Ontario and ensure that all scientifically verified tests and

treatment for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis are available to patients and health practitioners in Ontario.

We have heard from physicians that many are unable to diagnose and treat Lyme because of the inadequate testing available here in Ontario. There is no blood test or other laboratory test available that will reliably detect a current Lyme infection. The technology exists. Other countries and states are using it currently. Many Ontarians are travelling abroad to get these tests done. We need to ensure that people living in this province have access to the best testing and treatment out there. We need to do this immediately, so that more people do not become infected, are misdiagnosed and suffer as a result of not having the latest testing methods available to them.

Some doctors have gone as far as recommending that their patients go to the United States for a correct diagnosis and treatment plan. As you can imagine, this is a huge financial burden for many families. For others, it's not a financial possibility or even logistically possible for them to accomplish.

The motion I have just introduced includes directions to improve the availability and accessibility of effective services and treatments in the province to provide optimal patient outcome. As I mentioned earlier, one of the largest barriers we face are the misconceptions surrounding Lyme, and we need to improve public education.

Lyme disease is not confined to one small area. It's across this province and across our country. As an endemic area widens, we need to ensure that individuals and health care providers have the most current information available to them. We also need a comprehensive public awareness plan so that whether you are a child at school, hiking outdoors, walking your dog or on the ninth hole, you are educated about ticks and Lyme disease. We need to be working together with health care providers, the public education system, parks, provincial parks and outdoor sporting and leisure spaces to ensure that all Ontarians are properly informed about Lyme.

I have had the pleasure of meeting with individuals from the Ontario Lyme Alliance, Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation, the Ontario medical professional association, the Ontario College of Family Physicians and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies. We need to work with all the above to collect concrete data to better shape our ability to combat this debilitating disease. Many people have loved ones suffering from Lyme, and many have lost loved ones. One of the scariest things about an illness is not knowing what's wrong.

I want to recognize Rossana Magnotta, who has joined us here today. Rossana has founded a charitable organization, the G. Magnotta Foundation for Vector-Borne Diseases. The G. Magnotta Foundation has been working closely with the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation and executives of the Humber River Hospital to establish an extensive human tissue research program using today's most current DNA sequencing technology. Rossana is also part of an ongoing discussion with senior executives of the Public Health Agency of Canada in regard to better

diagnostics and education on Lyme disease issues in Canada. There are many individuals like Rossana who have dedicated countless hours to advance the discussion, to research and to determine the way forward in how we deal with Lyme disease. People like Rossana need to be consulted and included in the government's next step.

We have had several guests join us today who have been personally impacted or are suffering from Lyme. Some of them have shared their stories me. I would like to tell you about Sarah Herr. Unfortunately, Sarah couldn't join us today, but her father, Larry, is here with us. In September 2007, at the age of 18, after having been a healthy person all her life, she suddenly became very sick with severe flu-like symptoms and a variety of other unexplained symptoms. Her ongoing illness forced her to withdraw from first-year university, losing her scholarship in the process. During the next three years, she experienced 22 periods of severe undiagnosed illness. During those three years, she experienced numerous very invasive medical procedures which would have cost OHIP many thousands of dollars. Despite seeing several medical specialists in Barrie and Toronto, no doctor was able to come up with a diagnosis.

The ELISA screening test for Lyme was requisitioned—in fact, twice—but results were negative both times. The follow-up Western Blot test was requisitioned, but the test was never administered. According to available testing, she did not have Lyme. Doctors told her they didn't know what was causing her illness, but they did tell her that it definitely was not Lyme disease.

By 2010, her family began to suspect that she had Lyme disease, although doctor after doctor told her that she did not—since the disease is so rare in Canada that Lyme was not even a possibility. Sarah decided to send a sample of her blood to iGeneX, a tick-specialty lab in California. Bingo. The result came back as a positive test for Lyme. Sarah had her diagnosis.

She searched for and finally found a doctor in North York who was willing to treat her. After several treatments, this doctor suddenly announced, without explanation, that he could no longer treat her and that she would have to look elsewhere for her treatment. She soon discovered that there were no doctors anywhere in Canada who were willing to treat her illness. Even worse, she learned that some Canadian doctors who were successfully treating their Lyme patients were being harassed and disciplined by the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Some had even lost their licence to practise medicine because they were treating Lyme patients.

She learned that doctors in some American states were following different Lyme protocols and were having success treating their patients. Although treatment in the States was an expensive option, her family supported her and convinced her to proceed despite the cost.

By the time her American Lyme doctor treated Sarah, she had been sick for more than three years. The doctor told her that it could be several years before her health was even partially restored. The disease was so firmly established in her body that she would probably never

eradicate it. Her illness had become chronic. It was treatable, but not curable.

As you can imagine, Sarah and many others like her share similar stories of having their lives turned upside down and of serious and chronic suffering. It is clear by meeting with the health care professional organizations working online and the many people whose lives have been impacted that there is a need for an accurate testing, diagnosis and treatment protocol for Lyme in Ontario. A failure to do so would result in a clear dismissal of the thousands of lives that are impacted by Lyme.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak in support of the motion presented by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I want to first commend him for his commitment to this particular illness, because at the end of the day that's why the people of our ridings bring us to this chamber: to make sure that we are championing various causes and issues.

Our government is committed to protecting Ontarians from Lyme disease. Our Lyme disease strategy includes public education, human and tick surveillance, and tick control. I know the member opposite just said earlier that there was a report identifying some positive ticks in the Rouge Valley in the eastern part of the city of Toronto, and I certainly know that this is a concern in our community.

Public education is the first piece in raising awareness of this particular disease, helping Ontarians to avoid the disease and focusing on prevention, early treatment, early diagnosis etc. I know that our government is committed to the public awareness campaign launched in 2010 to educate the public on how to recognize ticks, tick bites and symptoms of Lyme disease, and ways to protect themselves.

I wanted to share that with everybody in the House, as well as those who are watching today. As a former member of the Toronto Board of Health, I can speak with some kind of expertise on this. On the Toronto Board of Health website—they have a huge website there—under Lyme disease, there are eight folders: clinical signs and symptoms, transmission, surveillance, diagnosis and testing, prevention, tick removal and submission, prophylaxis and treatment, and references. That's just the city of Toronto's website about Lyme disease.

1410

Also, in preparation for today's discussion on this particular motion—we know that this is not just an Ontario strategy we're talking about. We need to be looking at a national strategy, so I know my colleague has probably done his homework as well. Public Health Ontario also has a very expansive website about Lyme disease. It talks about the whole issue of vector-borne disease, the 2012 summary, the definition of Lyme disease and the whole issue of different vector-borne diseases. I want to make sure that the audience here in the House and those who are watching today are aware that both provincially and locally in the city of Toronto there is some public educa-

tion campaign. Obviously, there's more that needs to be done.

The public education campaign cannot be exclusively focused on the health sector. We just heard earlier from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin that outdoor education—I come from the school board sector. Many of our kids, every day, are going out for outdoor experiential learning. We've got to make sure that this particular motion brings in other ministries: the Ministry of Education; of course, the Ministry of Health; looking at the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities—we have post-secondary students outside doing experiential learning out in the community; and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. We don't want to see this particular disease as just health-centric. That's one thing I want to mention to the member opposite.

I know that our government has been working very closely with Public Health Ontario in terms of diagnostic guidelines and providing scientific advice and continuing medical education. I think the member opposite did mention the professional responsibility with respect to this particular disease, Lyme disease, as well as making sure, navigating through Public Health Ontario, to undertake the laboratory testing and do the early diagnosis so a treatment can be provided.

We are also working with Public Health Ontario and Lyme advocates, the community—and I think the member opposite earlier recognized some of the members who are here today from the Lyme community—to ensure the public and health care providers have the resources to have up-to-date information in terms of testing, treatments and diagnosis.

The other piece I want to share with the member opposite and the members of this House is the fact that, with regard to Lyme disease here, it's not like the tick can just stay in a stationary piece. In the Public Health Agency of Canada, they too have a very large, comprehensive website. In their website it talks about what the causes of Lyme disease are, the risk of getting Lyme disease, how we prevent Lyme disease, and the health professional piece—and I would say not just the health professional piece; I would say the whole issue of how to bring awareness of Lyme disease across the professional sectors. As I said earlier, it's not just about health sectors, but also educators—the symptoms, the treatments, the surveillance and the reporting. Oftentimes people may have something like a symptom but they don't report it. How do you get the treatment if you don't report it?

The other piece is that we have a very diverse community. I know that in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, for over 50% of my constituents English is a second language. How do we ensure that Lyme disease gets communicated across Ontario with a very large, diverse community?

At the end of the day, I welcome the conversation with the member from Algoma-Manitoulin about this particular disease, but more importantly, we need a comprehensive strategy working with all three levels of government, a multi-ministry strategy. I believe that there are merits to

having this conversation because we know that one person having a diagnosis of Lyme disease is one too many, and if we can prevent and educate and, most importantly, have early treatment of this disease, we may reduce deaths, which is the worst tragedy of this piece.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: During my years in the Ontario Legislature, there haven't been many times that members from all sides of this House have come together to support a private member's bill, and I do know that we in the official opposition will be supporting this legislation from Michael Mantha, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

The second reading of my private member's bill also, as many would know, was debated last Thursday. It covered not only Lyme but a number of other emerging infectious diseases. It also received all-party support.

The thrust of that bill, as I've indicated, is not only Lyme but also West Nile and Ebola, and setting in place a protocol for any future diseases that may arrive in the province of Ontario.

I think that's important for this legislation and the legislation we debated last Thursday. There is no legislation, at present, directing the ministry to have a comprehensive plan or a program dealing with diseases such as this, so these proposed laws would set in place a decision-making structure and policies to better enable the province of Ontario to better serve its citizens.

Today's motion, as we know, calls on the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to develop a comprehensive, integrated Lyme disease strategy for the province that is consistent and integrated with the action plan on Lyme disease being developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Over a number of months, I developed legislation to deal with the diseases that I discussed. If passed at second reading, it develops a provincial framework and an action plan that establishes a provincial surveillance program as well as educational materials and guidelines regarding prevention, identification, treatment and management of vector-borne and zoonotic diseases. The bill promotes research and requires collaboration among all concerned, particularly the public.

I should mention that vector-borne and zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases. Transmission involves animal hosts. In some cases, it involves vectors—in this case, the tick, and for West Nile, for example, mosquitoes.

We're competing for scarce resources. Much of the talk today is about Ebola, of course. It's important that the frameworks developed are based on objective science, to better enable government to set priorities to allocate those scarce resources. A surveillance program must be designed to properly track incidence rates and also associated economic costs.

There's obviously much work to be done on the diagnosis and treatment and the management side of things with respect to Lyme. There are so many conflicting medical and scientific viewpoints. There's the political

dimension and the social dimension. Social media has been accused of communicating inaccurate medical information and pitches for treatment that is dubious at best and expensive. There are also allegations, as we hear, of shortcomings in the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme directed at mainstream medicine.

There is much work to be done as far as emergency preparedness, and much work to be done for this government to work with the province of Ontario. Most importantly, the discussion must continue, but research must continue as well.

Again, today's legislation is all to the good. As the member had indicated, we have to work together. As I said, we'll be voting for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm glad we're discussing Lyme disease here in the House today, because I think this is a major issue in our province.

We're seeing a rising number of ticks here in Ontario, ticks which are carrying Lyme disease. In 2009, there were only 10 areas confirmed to have infection. Today there are 22 known areas. Since national reporting began in 2009, Ontario has had more than half of the country's reported cases.

When someone gets bit, they may see some initial symptoms, things like a red rash, and get a fever or get sick. Some may never see symptoms at all.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, when someone is bit by a tick and believes they have Lyme disease, the agency states they should, "See your health care provider right away if you develop symptoms of Lyme disease in the weeks after a tick bite."

1420

But what happens when the doctor won't diagnose Lyme disease or when the Canadian test comes back negative? This is a huge issue. You see, this is a major problem. The symptoms of Lyme disease can look like a lot of other diseases. People are being misdiagnosed. In my office, I have spoken with people who were treated for MS, fever, brain tissue damage, all of which were misdiagnosed Lyme disease.

This is still an emerging disease. There is a lot of information available to doctors out there about Lyme disease. The problem is that it leaves the people of Ontario holding the bill.

Those who contract Lyme disease get sick; they stay sick. They have constant fever. Processing thoughts becomes hard. They feel tired all of the time. In a number of cases, they come down with depression. Functioning in their day-to-day lives becomes almost impossible. They start to lose weight. Their overall health dramatically declines.

Look at the case of Amanda Wilson from Fort Erie in my riding. I know I mentioned this recently, but it's worth mentioning again. She works for the border security services. A few weeks back, I went to a fundraiser for her. I mentioned it then, and I'll mention it again: I was blown away by the purpose of this fundraiser.

Amanda had contracted Lyme disease. She lives in Fort Erie, yet every week she drives to New York state and pays out of pocket for her treatment. She can literally see her home across the river, yet she has to pay an American doctor for treatment.

I'm happy to say that the fundraiser was packed. Her friends from border security all came out and the community rallied around her and donated to their fellow co-worker to help her fight the disease.

Fort Erie is a great community, a community that takes care of its own, but they shouldn't have to. Amanda is a talented and smart young woman who should have the support of this province, and so should everyone else who contracts Lyme disease in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say here that the health minister did approach me on this case, and I thanked him very much for that. Amanda was thrilled to know that someone was finally—finally—interested in what is happening to her. For a long time, people had been ignoring Amanda or unable to help.

The only problem is that this doesn't affect only Amanda. I'd like the rest of my colleagues to listen to this. Just today I spoke with another constituent who has a bill right now totalling \$50,000 for treatment he has received in Florida. He pays \$3,000 a week in medical bills, plus what it costs to live down there. He has to leave his family, his friends and his job just to try to get treatment so he can function in his daily life. He told my office that the last year of his life has been wasted trying to find a diagnosis for this disease. Think about that. He couldn't get one here in Canada and Ontario. Now he flies to Florida to receive treatment for Lyme disease.

Mr. Speaker, what's even more troubling is that when we contacted him, he already knew—when I talked to him today, he already knew—of three other people in the city of Niagara Falls who have Lyme disease and are getting treatment in New York state.

These are people who are being bankrupted by these treatments. Just think about the pain they must go through if they are willing to spend their entire life's savings to go into debt just to get treatment. I thought we came to the conclusion a long time ago that no one in the province of Ontario should have to choose between good health and poverty.

These are employed people, too—people with good jobs. Imagine what it would be like to be on social assistance or to be unemployed with Lyme disease. You would never be able to go and get treatment. I have no doubt in my mind that if the people I've spoken with so far are coming to my office, there are people living below the poverty line with the disease who can't afford to get treatment.

When you have the symptoms of Lyme disease, you can expect to spend weeks, if not months, in and out of the hospital, trying to figure out what is wrong with you. Our medical testing is falling behind. It's frustrating already sick people. The only reason people keep coming back to the doctor instead of giving up is because of how hard it is to live with the disease. These are people living in Ontario who need medical help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to commend the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for this. I think it's a really thoughtful and important bill. I enthusiastically support it and commend him for his leadership and his work.

There are really no other times to do this, but I also really enjoy working with him. I think we've both worked very hard on a number of issues, particularly in his constituency. He has always brought a great deal of professionalism to this House, so I'm particularly pleased to be able to support another initiative of his, and I hope that spirit becomes more infectious.

While we're very supportive of this, the government of Ontario sees the issue of Lyme disease as much as a strategy that is needed as being part of our climate change strategy. The member from Niagara Falls described very accurately, I think, the plight of a person who makes repeated visits to a hospital just to get a diagnosis, because the geography which these ticks occupy now is huge. Ten years ago, when I moved back to Ontario, this was a southern Ontario disease, limited to peripheral areas of the province. We are now at a point where you will find these ticks have migrated up into the constituency of the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, up to Thunder Bay. Over the next few decades, the mean temperature in Ontario will warm faster than in most other parts of the world. It will be about a five-degree Celsius mean temperature change.

Compared to the continental United States and the south, the more south you are, it's two degrees Celsius, but as you know from looking at California—Mr. Speaker, our food prices are going to go up in all of our constituencies by 20% because of the three years of severe drought—20%. Severe drought in Brazil led to, today, Tim Hortons increasing its coffee prices by 10 cents a cup.

One of the biggest things that is actually going to drive the cost of living for Ontarians is going to be the accelerating pace at which the climate is changing.

So when I hear people, especially in the official opposition, who would like to chide the government that there should be no market mechanism to correct this market failure, and that everything we do is a carbon tax, I want them to think about the person who is trying to get help in Niagara Falls. Four out of five times, the reason that person got Lyme disease—they would likely have never gotten it, because that tick and the vector for this disease would not have existed in their community if the climate wasn't changed.

This is only one of a number of very terrible diseases that are going to be visited upon our citizens as a result of this rapidly warming climate, and it doesn't mean balmy days. We will have more severe winters that are ridiculously cold. We will see a lot more experiences as we saw in Buffalo, where 12 people have now died because we had a severe snowstorm, followed by flooding 24 hours later; or in Burlington, where people are having trouble getting insurance because the modern stormwater sewage system is under capacity.

But it's probably in the area of health care that the costs and the difficulties and the impacts on people's lives are going to be most severe. We know SARS, we know AIDS; we know where epidemics can come out of the blue.

We're now into a rich, changing, warming climate where viruses and bacteria borne on different species and insects are going to become more pervasive. The cost of Lyme disease over the coming decades is going to be in the billions of dollars. It is estimated that with 28,000 cases in the United States last year alone, up 25% from the year before—you're now seeing a very serious, debilitating illness that is increasing right now at 25% per year. That will probably accelerate: 30% per year, 40% per year. We will probably soon see rates that are five times what today's infection rates are, simply because, the way the ecosystems are working with these changing climates, when you have ticks which have thermal capacity, in other words, thermal sensors, they move—because they don't think—they just move and migrate to these different climates.

1430

How did we pay for this, Mr. Speaker? How are we going to pay for this? An aging population: How are we going to pay for this? We have exploding autism because of all kinds of reasons we don't understand. We have type 2 diabetes. We have onset dementia. How do we take care of our citizens when we're also going to be dealing with more ice storms and more flash floods? We have to have a more serious conversation about the costs of climate change on our infrastructure, on our lives, and we are not having a serious conversation.

I have little patience for members of the Flat Earth Society, some of whom are in this House, who think that climate change isn't happening and we should still be debating the science. I have about as little tolerance for those who don't understand that the cost of everything we do just to keep our citizens healthy is going to cost us billions of dollars a year—to have a transit system, to keep roads in good repair. We are going to have to retrofit about 90% of our buildings that are already built to actually get down to the insulation levels to reduce our GHGs to avoid this continuing disaster.

But this is a bright light today. I thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. I hope, in return, the NDP will support building a health strategy into our climate change strategy for these kinds of diseases because I think we're going to need to work together on this. This should not be a partisan issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to speak in support of the motion from the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. In my riding, the areas along the St. Lawrence are a real hotbed for Lyme disease, so this is a very important—and also personal—debate for myself and members in my riding.

I've been talking about the need for the government to get serious about Lyme disease since I first rose in the

Legislature on November 23, 2011, with a petition. In the three years since, I and many of my colleagues have tabled numerous petitions representing our constituents right across the province. The call for a comprehensive Lyme disease strategy isn't new for us. But what's frustrating for members and their constituents whose lives have been devastated by the disease is that those calls have fallen on deaf ears. The current and former Ministers of Health and Long-Term Care basically gave me a pat on the head with their petition responses and told me that everything was okay.

If they had listened to the constituents who have written to them, they'd realize everything isn't okay. The reality when it comes to Lyme is that things are getting worse, not better; and Ontario must start treating it like a serious disease by developing the comprehensive approach that the member is talking about in this motion: for testing, diagnosing, treating and preventing Lyme disease. I applaud him for putting this motion on the floor today.

In Minister Hoskins's response to the petition I tabled on July 7, he notes that the number of Lyme disease cases in Ontario is fairly stable. The reason for this is evident if he actually read the petition. The testing protocol in Ontario doesn't work. The result is that people who have the disease—because we lack the adequate test—don't show up in the statistics. What's worse, they can't get the treatment.

In a member's statement I made earlier this year, I spoke about one of my constituents, Karen Brown, whose horrible experience having been bitten by a tick near her Mallorytown home in 2013 really sums up, to me, everything that is wrong with our present system. She had two tests for the disease and they both came back negative, because OHIP won't cover the most accurate test. So instead of starting treatment, Karen was told to go get another test. Meanwhile, Lyme disease takes a stronger hold on her body and her prospects for recovery, if she ever starts treatment, lessen. It's a vicious circle that too many Ontarians watching the debate today can relate to.

Look, I don't want to stand here today and slam the government. I want to make sure that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Actually admits that there is a problem, and to do something about it. It's not always an admission of failure to say our system can do better, but it becomes one when you ignore the reality all around you and allow the disease to continue to ruin people's lives. It should be unacceptable to our Minister of Health, who is a doctor, to see Ontario falling behind other provinces and the federal government on Lyme. We can do better, and it's past time that we did.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always an honour and a privilege to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the residents of my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh and to add my comments to the debate of the day. Today I'm especially honoured to rise and speak about my support for the motion brought forward by the hard-working member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

In my short time in the House—well, it's been more than a year now, so I guess I shouldn't call it a short time, but I've been so impressed in the time that I've been here by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. He always brings his A game to the floor of this House. He always speaks from the heart, with great passion, about the men and the women in Algoma-Manitoulin, the great people who live there. He speaks to the issues that concern his residents; indeed, that's what they want us to do when they send us here: to be their voice and to raise their concerns.

This issue is of great concern to the people who call Algoma-Manitoulin their home. As we've heard earlier today, Lyme disease is not an issue just to the northern part of the province, but it's a problem for those of us who live in southern and southwestern Ontario, as well—as well as the eastern regions of the province, as we just heard.

Mr. Mantha, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, brings forward a very timely motion, one that calls on the government to develop a strategy on Lyme disease. This isn't just any type of strategy, but rather one that would be comprehensive, integrated and aligned with the Action Plan on Lyme Disease being developed by the federal Public Health Agency of Canada.

I know the spotlight on Lyme disease has garnered greater intensity over the past number of years, and I know this, Speaker, as do you, because of Point Pelee National Park. It's just a 45-minute drive from my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh. It's in your riding, as you well know, just outside of Leamington, and it has a tip of land that runs out into Lake Erie. That tip of sand is recognized as the most southern tip of land mass in Canada. That's not to downgrade the folks who live on Pelee Island, or further south out on Lake Erie, but Point Pelee National Park is as far as you can drive in Canada without taking a ferry, boat or canoe and still be within Canada.

The point of this geography lesson, Speaker, is to inform you that the park is now listed as one of the eight endemic areas in Ontario by the federal Public Health Agency of Canada. That's right; we know about Lyme disease in our part of the province. It's an issue that affects us all, no matter where we live in Ontario.

It's a known fact that the black-legged tick has become established at Point Pelee National Park. Obviously this is a cause for concern, not only for the visitors who visit this treasured national park—the smallest national park—but for the residents of our entire region. Point Pelee National Park has always been one of the most popular with visitors, partly because monarch butterflies cover the park from late August to early October—visitors come in droves to see that—and birdwatchers flock to the park in great numbers during the first three weeks of May for the Festival of Birds.

When I first moved to southwestern Ontario, way back in 1974, I moved to Leamington from Pembroke, right in the heart of the riding now held by Mr. Yakabuski, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I've re-

minded that member many times that I used to interview his father when I was a reporter up in Pembroke and his father was the Conservative member from that area. But I left CHOV television in Pembroke and was lured away to be news director of CHYR Radio in the tomato capital of Canada, Leamington—obviously before I moved into Windsor and became the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. But I digress, Speaker; I know.

Anyway, this is why all parties need to get ahead of the game here. We all should be supporting this motion. According to the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, there have been four cases of Lyme disease reported in my area of Windsor and Essex county since 2010. In 2013, two ticks were tested and found to be carriers out of the 96 that were submitted by the public and local physicians.

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Look, we need to take action. We need to take action now. We need to ensure that all scientifically verified tests and treatments are available to patients and their health care practitioners. We need to recognize the impact that Lyme disease has on individuals and families across this province, and we need to focus on addressing access-to-care issues faced by people at every stage of this disease.

As a province, let's take some immediate action. That's why I'm supporting this motion brought forward today by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

I came across some interesting facts that I thought I should share. Lyme disease was actually named after the town of Old Lyme, Connecticut, where a cluster of people were diagnosed with the disease around 1975. By 1977, the first 51 cases of Lyme arthritis were described. In 1982, the bacterium that causes Lyme disease was discovered. In 1987, Lyme disease became a reportable disease and all physicians were required to report it. By 1988, the news of Lyme disease spread to national media attention.

Mr. Speaker, I'm almost out of time. Let me just say that I heard the petitions on Lyme disease and the motion that's being brought forward by the member of Algoma-Manitoulin. I have one on my website. Anyone can download it. I have petitions in my constituency office in Windsor-Tecumseh. I invite anyone to come in who wants to take part in the campaign launched today by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to join today's debate and also share my support with the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

We've spoken about this issue for some time, and I am so pleased that, together, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and the member from Haldimand-Norfolk have shone a very, very important light on this disease that affects so many.

I represent the riding of Huron-Bruce. I have folks with whom I have been meeting since 2011 who suffer with this disease. I spoke to the private member's

initiative last week. While I was doing some errands in town over the weekend, I ran into one of the people I spoke of. She had tears in her eyes. It's an incredible thing, learning to live with this disease and learning to live with the fact that people don't always necessarily understand what it is you're going through.

Deborah, just for the benefit of the people who are here today, has Lyme disease, and she passed it along to her three sons. Her eldest son, Caleb, has been most affected. Before they really understood what the problem was, he was in a behavioural class. She had to send him 45 minutes away from home to a different school so he could get proper support in an educational environment, and then they sought out treatment. I thank the member from Niagara for recognizing the costs that are associated with treating this disease. They put everything towards their kids, until they couldn't afford it any longer.

Sadly, her eldest child, Caleb, is now back in behavioural classes and he's going to a psychiatrist when what he really needs is a government in Ontario that, first, agrees that this is an issue. Lyme disease is an issue that should be a priority and therefore have the proper action plan. That's why I congratulate the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, along with my colleague, for standing up and doing right by all the people in Ontario who have been affected.

Another lady from my riding was first affected by Lyme disease going back to 2008. She's watching, she cares and she wants action. Just earlier this week, she sent me an email—from Doris—with some suggestions. I'd like to read them into the record so that it's something to consider when this bill gets into committee. Doris suggests that we need:

“(1) Public education: awareness of Lyme in Ontario, how Lyme is contracted and how preventive measures can lessen the exposure.

“(2) Physician and health care workers' education: Lyme symptoms and treatment can mimic other conditions.” She feels very strongly that our local physicians here in Ontario, as well as health care workers, need to be more in tune with this particular disease.

Her third suggestion was—and we've heard about it; I read about it with our petitions—that we need “better Lyme testing methods” to be available right here in Ontario. It's ridiculous that people in Ontario have to send their tests to California to get proper testing as opposed to false negatives that happen all the time.

Doris went on to say that there are test methods recommended by the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society.

We can do better, Speaker, and I look forward to everyone's support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for a two-minute reply.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the members from Scarborough—Agincourt, Haldimand—Norfolk, Niagara Falls, the Minister of the Environment and

Climate Change, Leeds—Grenville, Windsor—Tecumseh and Huron—Bruce.

Lyme disease is called the great imitator. It often mimics many other conditions and diseases, such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, ALS, fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue, dementia, lupus and rheumatoid arthritis. Our physicians need to recognize Lyme as a possible diagnosis and educate themselves about the disease.

Merci beaucoup, Jeanne. J'espère que tu es contente que j'aie rentré ça dans le «record» de ta part. C'est grandement apprécié d'avoir participé à notre discussion qu'on a eue cet après-midi.

Lyme disease is also a significant and growing health concern in our province. The numerous people already infected and those who will be infected by Lyme unless action is taken come from all walks of life. This is a health care issue that is and needs to be non-partisan. People from all political parties are recognizing that they have to join together to effect changes needed to protect everyone in Ontario.

The fundamental difference between this motion and the bill I supported from my colleague last week is that this motion requires the development of a comprehensive and integrated Ontario strategy which will specifically address Lyme disease. In developing such a strategy, it will be necessary to examine a broad range of factors and include an examination of diverse perspectives, some of which have been and continue to be controversial, in order to arrive at solutions to improve the availability and accessibility of effective services and treatment in order to provide optimal patient outcomes.

Give me time, Speaker. I'm almost done.

The development of a well-crafted strategy for Lyme disease is fundamentally needed to provide the foundation for action planning. A strategy is an overall plan which can also include a formal mechanism by which current and future studies and discoveries can be evaluated and incorporated as they become available to allow both the strategy and any action plans and framework to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances.

That is why this motion needs to proceed independently. It would be very appropriate for Ontario to be the first Canadian province to establish a provincial strategy on Lyme disease. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank you all for joining us here today. Let's hope this is a step towards getting that strategy done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Orders of the day.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I move that, in the opinion of this House, water fluoridation promotes good health, and the optimal concentration of fluoride in drinking water is essential to the health of Ontarians by minimizing tooth decay, and helping restore tooth enamel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Delaney has moved private members' notice of motion

number 10. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, this past summer, I met with a number of dentists from our Halton-Peel Dental Association to resolve some issues between the province and the dental profession. At one of the meetings, almost in passing, one of my guests mentioned municipal water fluoridation and expressed a worry that municipalities might move away from it. That discussion caused me to get interested in the remark.

In the most recent municipal election, I was surprised by the number of fringe candidates advocating something as egregiously stupid as ceasing to add fluoride to municipal drinking water. So I looked into municipal water fluoridation some more, and I found some of the most transparent junk science that I have seen in quite a while.

We need to shine a light on something that Ontario is generally doing very well—adding a small amount of the element fluorine, about 1 milligram per litre, to municipal drinking water to protect against tooth decay—and not only raise the profile of doing something right, but sound a warning against doing something wrong by changing this sound and healthy practice.

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To this end, I'm very pleased to welcome some of the best dentists in the Halton-Peel area, who have taken some of their very valuable time to be with us today. I call members' attention to the east gallery, where I'd like to welcome Dr. Lisa Bentley, past president of the Halton-Peel Dental Association and current chair of the ODA economics committee; Mr. Frank Bevilacqua, ODA's director of professional, government and component society affairs; Dr. Raffy Chouljian, member of the ODA board of directors; Dr. Steve Lipinski, past president of the HPDA and my own dentist; Ms. Roberta MacLean, ODA's health policy specialist; Dr. Brian Tenaschuk, immediate past president of the HPDA and a current member of the ODA education committee; Dr. Larry Tenaschuk, member of the ODA board of directors, and his wife, Mrs. Olga Tenaschuk, whose birthday is today; and Dr. Brenda Thomson, past president of the HPDA and a current member of the ODA's membership services committee.

Let's start at the beginning. Fluorine is a natural element. In its pure form, it's a gas. It's found in nature, combined in minerals and rocks and soil. When water passes over these rocks and soil, it dissolves fluoride compounds and releases fluoride ions into the water. Fluoride is naturally found in varying concentrations in water everywhere. Where fluoride concentration is about 0.8 to one 1/1000th of one gram per litre of water, or 0.8 to one milligram per litre, drinking such water regularly makes the outer layer of teeth stronger and much less likely to get cavities.

In Ontario, the water found in Stratford naturally has just about this concentration of fluoride. As researchers half a century ago mapped the incidence of tooth decay and overlaid it with naturally occurring areas of fluoride concentrations, the picture was crystal clear. Where

fluoride was about 0.8 milligrams per litre, children and adults had cavities and tooth decay at rates consistently much lower than in areas where the concentration of fluoride was lower than this 0.8 milligrams per litre threshold. Not surprisingly, when fluoride was added to municipal drinking water with low fluoride content, tooth decay rates dropped as people regularly ingested the local drinking water.

After the common cold, tooth decay is the most frequent disease in the world and one of the leading causes of absences from school. If you take the flu shot to avoid an influenza infection, if you take a vaccination to avoid a whole host of fatal or debilitating diseases such as polio, tuberculosis and others, why wouldn't you want drinking water that strengthens your teeth and protects them from decay? We pasteurize our milk to protect ourselves from dangerous bacteria such as salmonella, E. coli, and listeria. We add small, trace amounts of chlorine to our drinking water to kill similar bacteria in our water.

In my parents' day, their water was not fluoridated, and they and most of their friends routinely lost all of their teeth and wore both upper and lower plates early in adulthood. I did benefit from municipal drinking water all my life, in three provinces, and combined with regular dental care, I still have my own teeth—which also means I'm a goaltender.

In 2012, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health—*Interjections.*

Mr. Bob Delaney: Goalies wear helmets these days.

In 2012, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Arlene King, published a report on oral health. It made four recommendations for action by the province. Let me read recommendation number one verbatim: "Conduct a review of current policies and mechanisms to ensure that all Ontarians have access to optimally fluoridated drinking water." The fact is that tooth decay and gum disease are not only preventable; they're easy to prevent. Fluoridation works just by having a drink of water, and it reaches everybody served by a fluoridated supply of municipal drinking water. You don't need private dental insurance to get access to it. Most municipalities in Ontario bring the levels of naturally occurring fluoride in their water up to this optimal level of 0.8 to 1 milligram per litre by adding the difference at the filtration plant where their water is treated.

Another way to see the cause and effect between tooth decay and the fluoridation of water is to look at data where city councils have listened to the junk science and stopped fluoridating their water. One such area is Dorval, Quebec, near where I grew up on the Island of Montreal. Water fluoridation was halted in Dorval, Quebec in 2003, and within three years, the rates of tooth decay had doubled.

In Ontario, the city of Windsor stopped fluoridating its water in 2013. Last weekend, a group of our Halton-Peel dentists came to my home to visit me to help me prepare for today. They were joined by a dentist named Dr. Charles Frank, a plain-spoken Windsor-area practitioner. Here is what Dr. Frank said to me of his professional work in Windsor. I will read it verbatim:

"In the Windsor-Essex region, there is a diagonal line that runs through the county which separated the fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas. It was common for the dentists to be able to have a good idea of which side of the line the children came from based upon the amount and severity of the dental decay they presented with.

"It can take a few years before the effects of removal of fluoride from the water supply become noticeable. It hasn't been very long, and already I've noticed an increase in the level of dental decay.

"A couple of months ago, I treated three children from Windsor, all between the ages of four and five years of age, who, due to their young age, and the quantity of dental treatment needed, required this treatment in hospital as outpatients, under general anaesthesia.

"A child of this age normally has 20 teeth. The first child had nine teeth which needed to be treated; the next, 13; and the last, eight. This is far in excess of what I am used to seeing in Windsor for children of this age.

"As a health care professional, it has been disheartening to see this needless increase in preventable dental disease in these children—one of the more vulnerable segments of our population.

"As an aside, each of these children are on the social services program administered by the city, another vulnerable segment of our community. This past week, Carol Pavlov, who administers the city's dental program, called our office and has advised us that the program is running out of funds due to the increased demand for dental treatment."

Speaker, it seems that the \$150,000 the Windsor city council thought it might save has been spent many times over in treating completely foreseeable and preventable dental decay.

I've read through the so-called arguments against water fluoridation. They span the spectrum from silly through pseudo-science all the way to the paranoid. I especially enjoyed reading the one about fluorine being a mind-control agent used by dictators.

The real science is methodical, clear, consistent and conclusive: Fluoride, in the right concentrations, coupled with regular dental care, means stronger tooth enamel and less tooth decay and gum disease. In my opinion, it's time for our Ministry of Health to step up and implement Dr. King's recommendation and insist that all Ontario municipal drinking water be treated not just with chlorine to kill bacteria, but fluorine to prevent tooth decay, just as all milk must be pasteurized and all children vaccinated against preventable diseases.

Moreover, it's time for our health care professionals, especially our dentists, doctors, hospitals, CCACs and public health clinics, not to take the good sense and sound science of fluoridation for granted. They need to use their access to their patients to treat them and their families and to teach them why their water is treated with fluoride and why it is important that it remain so.

I just want to thank all of our wonderful dentists, not just those who are here but those all across Ontario, for their overwhelming support and for speaking up on

behalf of their patients and urging our province and our cities to act—and in most cases, to continue to act—responsibly by fluoridating Ontario's drinking water now and into the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

1500

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure for me to rise on behalf of the PC Party and speak to this matter.

I have some research here, done by the Ontario Dental Association. It was interesting to find out that the first community water fluoridation process was developed—the trials began in Brantford, Ontario, in 1945. At last count there are over nine million Ontarians who have access to fluoridated water, representing 75% of the population in the province. Currently, community water fluoridation is a practice in over 30 countries around the world, providing over 370 million people with optimally fluoridated water.

I want to speak to something that the member from Streetsville was saying—it's not Streetsville.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Mississauga.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —Mississauga—Streetsville was saying about when these trials began. I grew up on a farm, as you well understand, Speaker. We didn't have access to fluoridated water. I can remember as a child, apart from some of the other hardships that we had, of walking uphill both ways to school and through snowdrifts that would make a sasquatch back off—

Mr. John Vanthof: It was uphill both ways, right?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, both ways—spending a considerable amount of time in a dentist's chair. At that time, and this is when I was in public school, the dentist said that I had a condition. I don't know the name of it, but I had too strong of an acid in my mouth and it was actually eating the enamel on my teeth. So I spent a lot of time in a dentist's chair, and I'm still frightened of these guys to this day. But growing up on a farm, we certainly didn't have access to fluoride. When our children were born, we certainly made sure that the dentist trips were on schedule because, again, we were still on the farm and didn't have access to this product.

In talking to my own dentist, he is quite worried with some of the children that come into his office with bad teeth. They're sick from it, they can't eat properly, and he wishes that there was a little bit more support for families who can't afford proper dentist care, that they could get the proper dental care and certainly their health would improve. Because I don't think it's any secret that if you've got poor dental hygiene, the rest of your body certainly suffers with colds and your system is not what it should be to fend off diseases.

So when we moved into town—actually it was before that. When I started serving on council in North Perth, one of the things I didn't like doing was getting a glass of water because it tasted bad to me, but it was the fluoride in it. Every once in a while we'd sit there and the councillor next to me would give me a nudge and say, "What's it smell like tonight?" Because he was from a farm, too.

Anyway, I think the benefits of this chemical certainly are well known. I have got all kinds of paperwork here—that there is just no evidence to me that it is a bad idea to put this in drinking water where it's needed. So we certainly support this motion and we want to continue to support it as we go along. The scientific proof is there so why don't we use it?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm absolutely pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion brought forward by the member from Mississauga—Streetsville today, as it has been a topic of interest and debate in my own hometown of Hamilton for a number of years.

The city of Hamilton produced an oral health report last year, and I have offered much of what I had to say based on that report. I'll make no apologies for that, Speaker, because this motion calls on the House to express an opinion on the effects of water fluoridation. I'm neither a doctor nor a dentist, so I'd look to the experts to provide guidance on this matter.

Although overlooked by our public health system, oral health is something that we must all pay close attention to. Those who have never suffered a toothache are few and far between, but we can likely remember a time when we have all endured excruciating pain as we waited to get to that dentist. We might not want to remember it, but we do.

Beyond the pain, however, oral health is integral to good overall health. Poor oral health can affect emotional health, social relationships and economic activities. Our economy is affected through lost work and school days and expensive emergency health care costs from untreated dental problems. So it is important that we take care of our teeth. It is important for our immediate comfort, it is important for our current and future overall health and it is important for our economy.

That is where fluoride comes in. Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel and prevents tooth decay. Water naturally contains some fluoride. In some communities, the natural fluoride levels are sufficient, but in others it makes sense to add a little bit more. By doing this, we improve oral health for a large number of people at a very low cost.

You will notice that I said "a little bit" of fluoride, and that's an important point, because too much fluoride can be potentially harmful, or maybe smelly, as the previous speaker said. Too much of anything can really be harmful. Too much medication, too many vitamins, even too much water can be harmful to your health, and fluoride is no different. It is important that we keep careful watch on our fluoridation process.

Brantford, as said previously, was the first city in Canada to add fluoride to their water, which was 68 years ago, and Hamilton followed suit and approved fluoridation in the city water in 1967. So we've had many years to study the effects of it.

What has been reported is that fluoridation reduces cavities in children's baby teeth by up to 60%, up to 35% in children's permanent teeth and 20% to 40% in adults and seniors through lifelong exposure. That's an absolute

significant benefit. The cost to Hamiltonians is about \$2.50 per household per year. That's about the cost of a coffee for the whole year, so that's pretty reasonable.

Support for fluoridation of drinking water comes from over 90 provincial, national and international dental and health organizations, including the Canadian Dental Association, the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario, the Ontario Dental Association, Health Canada, the Canadian Public Health Association, the World Health Organization and many, many more. There is very broad support for fluoridation in water among experts in the field.

Now, of course, there are many other ways to protect and promote our oral health. You'll have to excuse me, Speaker. I have a cold, so speaking today seems to be an issue. Regular brushing of our teeth, regular checkups at the dentist, eating healthy food—all things we should be doing, but it is a sad fact that not everyone can do what needs to be done.

Most Ontarians enjoy good health and access to health care services. Unfortunately, equitable access does not extend to dentistry. Many people can pay for dental treatment through an employee benefit package. Some are eligible for government support programs, and others pay for it out of their own pockets. Many of those who have to pay for it out of their own pockets simply can't afford to go to the dentist; some can't even afford toothpaste. When you're down to your last few dollars and you have children to feed, the reality for too many—for way too many—is that toothpaste is a luxury that they can't afford. Yes, that's right: Toothpaste is a luxury for too many people in Ontario.

Why do so many people find themselves in such a situation? Let's take a quick look at the government oral health programs in Ontario. In Canada, government programs pay for approximately 5% of dental treatment, but in Ontario, this figure is just 1.3%. Ontario pays the lowest amount for dental care of all provinces, \$5.67 per person, while the national average is \$19.54. Spending in Ontario has been decreasing since 2001, while the costs have been increasing.

1510

I hope the government members across the floor are listening, including the member who was so concerned about our oral health that he felt the need to bring this motion to the floor—a motion that doesn't call on this government to do anything; a motion that does nothing that I can see to improve the lives of Ontarians; a motion that simply asks us, many with no medical training at all, to express an opinion on what is good for our health. Yes, the motion helps in some small way to promote the benefits of fluoridation, but there is so much more that could be done.

It's about time that this government gave some serious thought to addressing the growing problems of the social determinants of health, including oral care. It's about time they stopped cutting back on health care services. It's about time they realized that health outcomes are directly affected by the amount of money that families

have, and did something to address the growing problem of poverty in our communities.

Saying all of that, I will be supporting this motion, but I hope that this is just the first very small step moving forward to make sure that we're really doing something about dental care in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly a pleasure to stand in the House and support the motion brought forward by my colleague the member for Mississauga—Streetsville: "That, in the opinion of this House, water fluoridation promotes good health, and the optimal concentration of fluoride in drinking water is essential to the health of Ontarians by minimizing tooth decay and helping restore tooth enamel."

As the former medical officer of health for the region of York, it was my responsibility to advise regional council on this issue of fluoridation and to advise them on the dose that was required in our water in York region. This particular measure is really the cornerstone of good public health practice. We in public health believe that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. As has been mentioned, the cost of fluoridation of water is in fact very, very low when you consider the alternative, which is increased dental costs.

I was surprised, though, that my colleague felt it necessary to bring this motion forward at this time. I thought this battle was won long ago, and it was certainly with some interest that I caught up with what has been happening across the province, with many municipalities wanting to re-examine this. The Ontario Dental Association had found it necessary to go out to municipal councils to argue for this very essential public health measure. Apparently this has been an issue in Tottenham; Alliston; Hamilton has been mentioned; Calgary; Halton; and Haldimand and Norfolk. Of course, their medical officers of health have all made their representations and, in fact, fluoridation is currently in place in most municipalities in Ontario.

This controversy around the safety of the addition of fluoride to drinking water does go back many, many years. I was intrigued to discover that, during the 1950s and 1960s, some opponents of water fluoridation suggested that fluoridation was a communist plot to undermine public health. Some of the older members of the Legislature—not to name any names—may remember a broadcaster whose name was Gordon Sinclair. He used to refer to fluoride in drinking water as rat poison.

Of course, as has already been mentioned in this House, excess fluoride can be harmful. It can lead to minor things like dental fluorosis, which is staining of the teeth, but it can also, in very extreme, large doses, result in skeletal fluorosis, which is harmful. This is something that can occur with an excess dose of just about any particular medication or additive that we put into food or other products.

I do want to address briefly the issue of oral health. Oral health is absolutely essential for one's overall health. It is obviously not only painful to have dental

caries, but it can also lead to things like abscesses and far more serious health issues. In my own Ministry of Community and Social Services, there is considerable concern about those with poor oral health—with cavities, or maybe who have lost many teeth and so on—in terms of their ability to seek employment. Imagine going to an interview without having your teeth.

So I'm pleased to say that our ministry, in fact, has started the healthy smiles program, which consolidates a number of programs to assist those vulnerable people in financial need with oral health care. I must say that that is done with the assistance of the Ontario Dental Association, and we value that assistance tremendously.

I did reference the dose. The actual dose that Health Canada has set as the guideline for fluoride in drinking water is, as a maximum acceptable concentration, 1.5 milligrams per litre. In York region, we were using a dose of 0.9 milligrams per litre. The dentists in our community, a number of years ago, suggested that perhaps they were starting to see some of the dental fluorosis—in other words, perhaps excess fluoride. People use fluoridated toothpaste; some people even take fluoride supplements. In consultation with our local dental association, we advised our regional council to reduce the dose to 0.7 milligrams per litre, which is, as I understand it now, a fairly common dose that we're seeing across the province.

In terms of the people who have commented on the need for fluoride in drinking water, my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville did quote the former chief medical officer of health for Ontario, Dr. Arlene King, and one of the things that she did say in her report a couple of years ago was, I think, worth repeating here today: "Fluoridation is highly effective and can reach large populations who benefit from it."

Other preventive services may be less accessible to people without private dental insurance, or to those living on low incomes, which further reinforces the importance of a population-based prevention such as community water fluoridation.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to support my colleague's motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Haliburton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Excellent. I was just giving you a little hint there and you got it, all of it. Thank you very much.

I'm pleased today to speak to ballot item number 17, brought forward by the member from—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott:—Mississauga—Streetsville—I was just testing—on water fluoridation.

Coming from a health care background, as a nurse, I can certainly appreciate the importance of working with the medical and health professionals to develop solutions that ensure Ontarians receive the best health care possible.

We just heard from the minister of her background and how prevention is worth a lot, especially a lot of costs, and a lot of health care benefits and a better life for those people.

The resolution we have here today promotes water fluoridation as good health, and that an optimal concentration of fluoride in drinking water is essential to the health of Ontarians by minimizing tooth decay and helping restore tooth enamel.

It's been spoken about, and it's correct: The responsibility for the fluoridation of drinking water supplies is a decision that is made by each municipality. We will be supporting them indirectly, maybe, because it does support good health.

As many know, but I'll say again, fluoride is a mineral that already exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean. It works by making the outer layer of teeth stronger and less likely to get cavities. It can also prevent or even reverse the decay process.

According to the Ontario Dental Association, which has been a strong proponent of this, the first Canadian community water fluoridation trials began in Brantford in 1945. At last count, 9,229,015 Ontarians had access to fluoridated water, representing 75.9% of the population of the province, which is pretty remarkable.

Currently, community water fluoridation is practised in over 30 countries around the world, providing over 370 million people with optimally fluoridated water. The goal is to find the right balance of fluoride in the water, to maximize its benefits and minimize the potential of dental fluorosis.

Dental decay is the second-most-frequent condition suffered by children and is one of the leading causes of absences from school. I don't know if many people knew that before we had this discussion. It kind of surprised me, that stat about school. It was quite amazing.

1520

A lot of people don't understand the connection with dental health and overall health. We're making this point today, but it is very important that people really realize that.

With children, it can reduce tooth decay in children's primary teeth by 60% and in permanent teeth by up to 35%. It's also useful for those with limited dental care and can help prevent severe health complications. We all have parts of our constituencies that may not have access, whether through economic reasons or just availability, to go to the dentist. This is a broad preventive measure that we can do, and we should certainly promote it. It's endorsed by over 90 national and international professional health organizations, including Health Canada, the American Dental Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to support the member from Mississauga–Streetville's motion here this afternoon. I'm pretty sure he's going to receive all-party support, so, well done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'll be less than a minute, Speaker. I just want to mention a couple of things about the Windsor debate that happened in 2013. I've never seen so much documentation. City councillors were given this report and this report—we had stacks of reports.

My friend Dr. Charles Frank has new evidence. I suggested that Charles should take that new evidence to the new city council, which has a new mandate, and perhaps they'll reverse the decision we made back in 2013. Those who said they didn't want it said they didn't have a choice: You could choose whether to take a flu shot, but you couldn't choose whether to drink fluoridated water. They said the fluoride they were putting in the water was an industrial by-product that was so toxic that you couldn't landfill it. That's the argument.

Kitchener-Waterloo had a referendum on it, and 5,149 lawsuits followed. They never used it in Leamington because Heinz wouldn't put it in the baby food. Those were the arguments and the decision made in Windsor.

We support it. The NDP supports it. I just wanted to put that on the record because Windsor–Tecumseh was mentioned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I think it's my turn to speak today; I don't know. Anyway, I'm following the Minister of Community and Social Services in support of my colleague's private member's resolution about municipal water fluoridation. I spoke earlier on the previous private member's bill from the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

As a former member of the Toronto Board of Health—we had long debates about fluoride in the water. As someone who spent much of my previous career in public health, this should be a no-brainer. I'm applauding my colleague, who's also my seatmate around here, for bringing in this resolution. I don't understand why, when we have scientific evidence of the importance of fluoride in protecting young people's health—and I want to thank the dentists who are here today to hear this debate, because it's absolutely criminal when we see young people with dental problems that can be prevented.

I know that in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, we have many new Canadians living there, and they are coming to Canada with a mouthful of preventable dental problems if only their home country had fluoride. These are all preventable things, and I don't understand—maybe it's the nurse in me or maybe I'm just being progressive about this whole issue.

The other big thing here that the member from Mississauga is bringing forward in terms of a private member's bill is raising awareness for those municipalities he alluded to earlier, like Windsor, and the dentists seeing these dental problems that are all preventable clearly tells us that we need to have a conversation with those communities that still believe that fluoride is bad for you. We have scientific evidence—and I know the minister and the Premier have always said scientific-based, evidence-based practice. We have evidence-based practice that

fluoride is good for dental health. At the end of day, I'm fully supportive of the private member's resolution, and I'm going to encourage those municipalities who are thinking of removing fluoride from the water: Think about the next generation of young people. Are you prepared, on record, not to protect young people's oral health? The costs of removing fluoride are going to be greater later on than today. At the end of the day, we've got to raise awareness and provide the facts based on evidence, as opposed to, as my colleague said, "junk science." We know fluoride does protect oral health.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in this House, especially on this issue. I'd like to commend the member from Mississauga—Streetsville for bringing forward this motion on water fluoridation.

Unlike many of the members here, I have no medical background, no dental background. I'm a dairy farmer by trade. Yes, I've researched—

Mr. Wayne Gates: You still brush your teeth.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, I brush my teeth. I lived in the country, and I didn't have the benefit of fluoridation.

I've read most of the research. We've done a lot of research, all of us, on this. But I have one advantage, because in my riding of Timiskaming—Cochrane I have the president of the Ontario Dental Association, Dr. Rick Caldwell. He's a great dentist and not a bad golfer either. The reason I know that is because Rick, Nancy, Ria and I—I'm a terrible golfer; I've golfed, like, twice in my life—did a charity event for Ducks Unlimited. Nighttime golf. I think it was like a four-man scramble. It's lucky, because Rick and Nancy can golf and Ria and I would still be out there if it wasn't for them. But we had a long discussion about—other matters as well—fluoridation, my riding, Rick's practice and Rick's knowledge. In Rick's practice, he deals with patients who have access to fluoridated water, patients who don't, and he also has patients who have naturally fluoridated water. He explained to me that you could actually tell where kids came from without looking at their address. You could basically pick where these children came from based on if they had access to fluoride in their water or if they didn't.

Speaker, that's proof enough for me. You can have all the scientific arguments you want, but if you can tell where a child comes from based on the health of their teeth, whether it's fluoridated water or not, that's a good enough argument for the people behind me, and I think for the people in this House.

There's something else I'd like to mention. I'd like to get this on the record because I think it's really important. It's not part of this debate, but it's something that this House needs to hear. First Nations have—and Rick does work with the First Nations—incredible problems with dental issues. We've been discussing First Nations in this House—I believe there's a First Nations meeting going on in the House today. Something I'd like to put on the record is that while we're discussing whether or not we should have fluoride in water—it's a

huge issue—in remote First Nations in Ontario, 80% of them don't even have access to potable water; 80% have to boil their water. I think that's something we have to put on the record.

This is a good motion. I think it does what it's intended to do, because it has brought some visibility to this issue and it has made us all think. But we should also all think about some of the things that are equally—perhaps more—important, and that is one issue that this province has to fix.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville's motion, which is an excellent motion.

It's nice to be standing in this House and listening to a debate where there is real agreement, thoughtful agreement and consensus.

Over the years as a city councillor, I was often approached by very-well-intentioned residents who were concerned about fluoridation of the water. Despite the fact that Toronto has been fluoridating its water for some 60 years, and it has proven to be an effective way of protecting dental health and promoting dental health, every once in a while, I'd have these very-well-intentioned people coming forward, whose concern was about what we are putting in the water that is going into our bodies: "Where is this substance coming from?" As one of the other members said, I also heard all the arguments about, "This is an industrial by-product and it's toxic, and you wouldn't put it in a landfill."

Despite all these good intentions, they were losing sight of the purpose of fluoridation, and that's to protect our health, and our dental health is just one part of our health. As the minister was saying, dental health, if not well taken care of, leads to other health implications—abscesses, infections, other issues—not to mention the social issues. A child or a young adult without nice, healthy teeth may find themselves at a social disadvantage as well.

We're very blessed in this country that people generally have good dental health, partially because we have excellent dentists and access to dental products—but so many Ontarians have fluoridated water and have had it for generations now. I hope this motion from the member for Mississauga—Streetsville causes those communities in Ontario that haven't opted for it yet to pause and think about it. They're actually denying the residents of their communities an important measure to protect their health.

I applaud the member for this. He's doing a great public service for the health of all of Ontarians today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

Further debate?

The member from Mississauga—Streetsville has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I am very impressed with the comments and the passion shown by the members who have commented on this. Certainly my colleague from Perth—Wellington, born like me near the end of the dark ages of dentistry, has learned how beneficial fluoridation is. My colleague from Hamilton Mountain quoted some of the authorities behind fluoridation, and I thank her for that, because I didn't have time to get to those in my remarks.

We had one MD, the Minister of Community and Social Services, talk to us today, lending her perspective of being the former chief medical officer of health for York region and talking about how they adjusted the fluoride to ensure that it got just the right job done. Two nurses, the members from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and Scarborough—Agincourt, talked about not merely their perspective but mentioned that some 30 countries worldwide do this, and pointed out that a control group would consist of newcomers who come to Canada from countries that don't fluoridate their water, and we can see with stunning clarity what condition their teeth are in.

We also were fortunate to hear from two city councillors. I thank my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh for the insider look at a decision that perhaps Windsor city council might want back and, of course, my colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, who pointed out that no matter what your politics may be, fluoridation has proven itself to be good sense and sound scientific practice. Finally, my friend from Timiskaming—Cochrane, in his own words a common sense dairy farmer, could see for himself the difference between the oral health of kids who came from areas where the water was fluoridated as opposed to those who had come from other areas.

Finally, once again, thanks to my friends from the Halton-Peel Dental Association, not merely for the idea for this resolution but for their assistance in preparing for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member for Mississauga—Streetsville and all members for their contribution to a healthy debate this afternoon on this particular motion 10.

Orders of the day.

PROHIBITING DRIVING WITH UNLAWFUL HANDGUNS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INTERDICTION DE LA CONDUITE AVEC DES ARMES DE POING ILLÉGALES DANS LE VÉHICULE

Mr. Colle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Civil Remedies Act, 2001 to promote public safety by prohibiting driving in a motor vehicle with an unlawfully possessed handgun / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi de 2001 sur les recours civils afin de promouvoir la sécurité publique et d'interdire la

conduite sur la voie publique d'un véhicule automobile avec une arme de poing dont la possession est illégale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Mike Colle: This private members' time, I think, is a very precious and important time for all MPPs. Over the years, I've moved a number of private members' bills, some that have been passed and some that have not passed. I think it's a very important time for us as MPPs to express, to the other members of the Legislature, to government, no matter what side you're on, and to, I think, the public at large in Ontario, certain things that we feel passionate about or feel that are important. I know that sometimes a member will sort of put down another member for moving a bill because they're not aware of it or not tuned into it, but I think every member should treat this time with a great deal of reverence, because it's about the only time, whether you're a government member or an opposition member, to really express something that you feel is important. I thank you for this opportunity.

This Bill 24 is a bill that I've introduced on a previous occasion. Essentially, it's a bill that has come out of a reality in my community and the greater community of Toronto. It's about the fact that a number of innocent people have been gunned down in cold blood by thugs who drive by with guns in their cars, and they shoot people, in many cases for no good reason. They may shoot them because it's an initiation ritual. Sometimes they shoot them as revenge.

Sadly, this summer a 31-year-old teacher, a model teacher, Abshir Hassan, was shot down in cold blood standing not too far from the school he was teaching at. Two of his friends were also shot. Sadly, Abshir succumbed to his injuries and was killed. The perpetrators have never been caught.

I know that earlier this year in Scarborough there was a young mother of four children, Andrea White, who was in her garage area with a couple of her friends. There was a drive-by shooting. Andrea was shot and killed, and her four children were left without a mother after this drive-by shooting in Scarborough.

I was trying to do a survey of where these have been occurring, and this is just over the last year. We'll see that in Windsor there was a drive-by shooting on August 13. There was another one in December in Windsor; in January, Niagara Street in Windsor; Sherway Gardens, Etobicoke; Enfield Place in Mississauga—this is all within the last year; Heron Road in Ottawa; another one in Ottawa; Major Mackenzie up in Vaughan. So it's not just in my community and not just in Toronto. In Sudbury there was another drive-by shooting, a 24-year-old injured in a vehicle who just got shot in Sudbury; another one in Sudbury.

1540

So these are happening, and they're happening because there's a small element in society that feels there's no consequence in shooting people. They feel there's no

consequence, because they know that—the peculiar thing is, the way our laws work, the Criminal Code basically can be very hard on criminals when they commit crimes like carrying guns or shooting people, but yet if they're in a car, there is a big loophole.

That's why my act here tries to basically add another level of frustration for these criminals by saying that if a police officer finds that you have an unlawful handgun—these are guns that are stolen, smuggled—and you have one in the vehicle, the police officer should have the right to impound the vehicle and suspend your driver's licence for seven days. Take the car off the road at least and let the other criminal proceedings go ahead, but at least take the darn vehicle off the road.

The strange thing is that these thugs that drive around with these guns—they have so many tricks on how to avoid criminal prosecution. One of the tricks they use is that they will say, “Yes, there is a gun in the car, but I just borrowed the car from my Uncle Louie, and I didn't know my Uncle Louie had a gun underneath the driver's seat.” So, therefore, that person walks.

There was an individual who was driving a car, and the people in the car had six weapons in the car. The police seized six handguns. The driver of that car got off scot-free because he said, “I didn't know my friends had guns in the car.”

Another trick they pull is that their younger partners who are under 16 will have a gun in their parka or in their purse. They'll say, “It's not mine. I didn't know that the person with me had a gun in their purse.” Or the other thing they'll do is they'll say, “I rented the car; I borrowed the car; so therefore I didn't check the whole vehicle for weapons. The weapon was there; I don't know how it got there.”

In all these cases, these people basically avoid any kind of prosecution under the Criminal Code. I'm saying: Let's at least use the powers we have under the motor vehicles act, like we did with—and I think, Mr. Speaker, you were here in 2007, and MPP Kwinter knows well about this—when we had a rash of stunt driving, car racing, where people were going 200 kilometres an hour. We put in a law which said that, “If police officers caught you racing at that speed, or stunt driving, the police officer would be given the authority to seize that vehicle and suspend the driver's licence.” I think that has been a good law that we passed to try and make our roads safer.

I think we have an obligation to at least frustrate these people who flagrantly disobey our laws and drive around with these guns that they have no business having. We should make it difficult for them to be mobile. Where are they going with a loaded handgun in their car? Are they going to go see Grandma? No; they're going, probably, to commit a criminal act. It's pretty obvious. If you're not a police officer, if you're not a sharpshooter, a marksman who's in a gun club, or if you're in the army—we're not talking about ordinary working people who have the right to carry a gun. But these people are essentially using their vehicles as a means of committing a crime and of transporting that unlawful handgun.

This bill is supported by the Police Association of Ontario. The city of Toronto council supported it unanimously. The Ontario Safety League—Brian Patterson was here today supporting my bill, as was Dave McFadden, the past president of the Ontario Police Association.

Our front-line officers know that there is a great danger. If you approach a car—it could be speeding; it could be running a stop sign. If you approach a car and they roll down that window, you don't know what that person is going to have. They are very, very apprehensive, because there are just too many of these criminals who can get these guns.

I know that in Toronto, it's very common. For 50 bucks, you can rent a gun.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Rent?

Mr. Mike Colle: Easy. Rent a gun for 50 bucks. It's all out on the street. If you can get 50 bucks, you can rent a gun. And what do you do with that gun? Sadly, a lot of what they do with these guns is totally connected with the cocaine trade. If there's cocaine, if there are drug dealers and if there are crack houses, they have guns.

Therefore, we're putting our police officers at risk every day. That's why the Police Association and Police Chief Blair are supportive of this legislation—because it's not going to stop all these gangsters, but at least it's going to make life a bit more difficult for them, to at least impound their car, no questions asked: “What are you doing with a gun in the car? Okay, you can explain that later in court, but at least we're going to take the car off the road, because you are a danger to innocent people and you are dangerous, certainly, to the police who have to make our roads safe.”

There are basic provisions of this bill to try and at least do something that is, again, helpful to our police and helpful to our citizens who just want to go about their business and do their regular things. If this can prevent one more death in one of these drive-by shootings, it is worth it, at least as a deterrent. It sends out a warning that this is another thing that might bite you if you flout the laws like they are doing right now.

It is, again, something that will send a strong message out to these people, because many of them are either totally foolish about their understanding of what reality is—some of them are very arrogant about reality, but these people need some kind of extra deterrent, because right now it's just too easy to get away with driving around our city streets with a weapon. Anything that can restrict their mobility and make it more difficult would be a help to the police and would be a help to our citizens who are looking for safety.

I know that in the past we've talked about how we need more social programs or educational programs to cut down on crime. I totally support that, but in one area of my riding where I've had a number of these shootings—it's a high-risk neighbourhood—we've got over 60 government-related programs that work there: by the city, by the province, by the feds and by the school boards. There are 60 programs, but do you know what ruins the 60 programs? That, at any time, criminals can

come into that community and start shooting the place up. They shoot people. A guy walking a dog got shot and killed; a teacher got shot; a 15-year-old coming home from school got shot—and in most cases, they get away with it. It's really hard to apprehend these criminals because there is a fear about reporting them.

That's my reality and that's why I think that this bill would at least help our police officers and help our communities stay a little safer. They should be safer, especially where people are just doing their normal, everyday business. They should be doing that in some kind of peace and comfort, and not be worried about somebody driving by and shooting them. Thank you very much for your attention, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I thank the member from Eglinton—Lawrence for his concerns about gang warfare. I think that we all tend to live in our own little neighbourhoods and feel quite safe; it isn't till we read something on the news that we kind of wake up and realize what a dangerous world we live in sometimes, and how precarious life can be.

We're all worried, I think, for our family, our friends and ourselves being out there. I think that there's a lot that we can do to combat some of the gang warfare that goes on in some of the big urban centres, but it's limited. It's limited, what we can do. I support the efforts of this bill.

We all realize that for some criminals there's a certain amount of peer pressure, especially with youth and gangs. Even if they know that they're putting themselves at risk by driving their friends—they know if their friends have concealed weapons, or even visible weapons. They usually know. Sometimes they may not know, but they usually have a pretty good idea if their friends have weapons. I think that adults—what we call professional criminals—will give some thought as to whether or not they're going to drive the getaway car for bank robbers. They'll give some serious thought to it. But I just wonder how much youth will think before they act, because we know about the peer pressure. Just losing their car—they could lose their lives in gang warfare, and they still go ahead and do it.

1550

So that's part of the problem: that too many youth see so many dangerous things in life, not just guns, not just gangs, but just sort of walking along a cliff, thrill seeking, bungee jumping, skiing off—I know people who are ski patrol, and they can never understand why these kids go off the trails, because it's dangerous. That's why they do dangerous things, because it's dangerous. That's the whole fun for them. They don't think of the consequences. They think life sometimes is like a videogame where you lose your life and you just buy another life or you wait and you get another life. They don't understand the consequences. They don't understand that death is permanent.

I think that what seems to be very effective in our schools is when people who have survived, either as a

victim or as part of a gang, go out and speak to the kids before they get themselves into trouble. I know from kids in my neighbourhood, from my own children—they said that this was incredibly effective, when they went and heard from kids who were involved in gangs, kids who were in a car accident who were maybe speeding or stunt-driving or they knew their friend was driving dangerously but they didn't speak up because of peer pressure; that all these things can be effective. It might not be the actual law itself, because I think these kids don't know about the laws and they don't care about the laws when they do know about the laws, but what might be effective is to have education and public awareness in our schools.

I've always felt that TV programs, sitcoms that are very popular, sometimes are the best educational tools for all of us in terms of alternative lifestyles, in terms of different career paths. People do learn a lot from TV shows. I almost wonder if we should just leave it up to chance that they decide to do certain episodes on certain topics. Maybe it's up to us politicians to go to the writers of some of these sitcoms that are popular and say, "Hey, you know what? We want to get a public awareness campaign going on the fact that kids can lose their car or what happens when they get involved with a gang, and maybe you could fit that in your storyline of *Glee* or *Modern Family* for us and help us get the message out." I think that we spend millions of dollars sometimes on these public awareness campaigns that aren't terribly effective, whereas one sitcom, one episode, can really hit home a message.

I think that we want to see our safer roads, and I think that this bill does address that. So I definitely would support anything to encourage people not to drive—I guess we can call them friends—peers in their cars who they know probably do have weapons or they know for certain do have weapons. I think that maybe it has to go further, that people shouldn't have relatives living with them who they know are members of gangs and they know have weapons and they know are dealing with drugs as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to learning more about this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Bill 24, the Prohibiting Driving with Unlawful Guns Act, 2014: Thank you for allowing me to speak on this issue. This bill may seem confusing at first, prohibiting driving with unlawful handguns. The thing with this bill is, you can't really prohibit it because possession of an illegal handgun is already prohibited. What this bill does do is give our police force the ability to take action when they catch someone driving with an illegal handgun.

We all know the issue of gun control at the federal level has become extremely controversial. For some reason, this has become a political issue when, really, they should be interpreting the suggestions of the police force locally, provincially and federally. We have to

remember that the local police in our community will be the ones on the front lines who deal with this issue the most. They're the ones who come face to face with it. Their suggestions are the ones we should take seriously.

As far as I can see, the Police Association of Ontario and Crime Stoppers are supportive of this. They're supportive of having another tool to keep handguns off our streets and keep our streets safe.

"The members of the Toronto Police Association see first-hand the devastating impact firearms, especially handguns, have on the citizens of Ontario. Our association fully supports your ... efforts to provide another tool"—there is that word again, another tool—"to assist officers in fighting ... gun crime in our communities." Who said that? Mike McCormack, president of the Toronto Police Association.

"The Police Association of Ontario fully supports Bill 24. Modern criminals are more frequently arming themselves and are increasingly mobile. This bill will provide an additional tool"—there's that word again—"for front-line police officers to take illegal guns off the streets and remove the offender's mobility. Police officers in this province know too well the ... impact the increasing use of illegal guns is having" on our communities. "This bill can only assist us in working to keep our communities safe. We urge the Legislature to pass this bill." That was Dan Axford, president of the Police Association of Ontario.

Of course, this bill doesn't touch on the root causes of crime, things like poverty and a lack of proper social assistance to keep our people away from a life of crime. One of the main purposes of this bill is to keep our streets safe and reduce the illegal use of firearms. We can do that, but that's after the fact. If we want to get a head start on this issue, and I know we all do, we should start at the root cause of addressing the issues that cause crime.

There are a number of studies out there—they aren't hard to find—which indicate that poverty breeds crime. We need to take a closer look at those kinds of policies and concerns in order to make our community safe and healthier.

Just this week, after question period, I took a tour of the Thorold detention centre, and it was amazing to me how many young people—young people—were in that jail. I was also amazed at how understaffed it was, and how many mental health issues we had there among our young people.

On the bill, I don't think anyone disagrees that we need to eliminate illegal handguns off our streets. This measure will help raise the penalty for those who want to transport these handguns.

Though I find it interesting, the original version of this bill, Bill 66 from 2013, had a wider scope. Instead of just being illegal handguns, the original bill was focused on illegal firearms. I'm not entirely sure where the narrowing of the scope went or why it's here.

If we're committed to keeping illegal guns off our streets, then to me it makes the most sense to keep all illegal weapons off our streets, not just certain kinds. We

had complaints before that people weren't being charged if they were caught in a vehicle with an illegal handgun. This bill will close that loophole, but the language seems to indicate only if you have a handgun. If you're driving around with a rifle or a semi-automatic weapon in your car, you still fall under the old regulations.

1600

There was a case a few years back of someone being pulled over with a grenade launcher in the car. So I'm confused as to why we're softening our stance. We know if it's not just illegal handguns in vehicles, we should recognize that. We've got heart-wrenching stories of people being pulled over with numerous guns in their cars and then walking away from charges and using those firearms to commit crimes. I'm certain that not all these stories were limited to handguns.

This law isn't here to prohibit those who have lawfully registered weapons. We need to make sure we're not making any concessions to those who are already breaking the law. Make no mistake about it: There are illegal handguns in every member's riding. This isn't an issue that affects just one MPP or one region; it affects the entire province. Let's continue to work with our local police forces addressing the issues that they ask us to. Let's make sure we don't play politics with issues of gun violence and illegal firearms. They are the experts who have made the recommendations to the province and, quite frankly, to the country. Thanks very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: It's quite an honour to rise in this House and speak to Bill 24. I want to applaud the member from Eglinton—Lawrence for coming up with this very smart, in my opinion, timely bill.

I want to speak to it from three perspectives. First, I want to speak to it as a parent. I'm a young parent. I have two kids. One is four and one is six. Having kids completely changed my perspective on life. Nowadays I do everything thinking how this is going to affect my kids, including the fact that I ran and have the privilege of representing the great riding of Trinity-Spadina here today in this Legislature. I think I am doing a very meaningful job for the future of my kids and of kids in this province.

I want to share with the House a very terrifying close encounter with gun violence in my community. About two years ago, both of my kids were playing in the playground near my parents' house. Both of my parents were looking after them. While they were enjoying themselves, they heard two shots close by. Luckily, it was just the sound and the shock that they felt, and they were quickly taken indoors to my parents' house. Later we found out there was a gunshot nearby and someone, I think, was fatally injured at the time.

To me, as a parent, when I heard that over the phone, not only was it shocking, but I was shivering, because it was so close. We all hear and we all watch these things happening on the news, but having something like that happen close by, near my parents and near both of my

kids, is terrifying for sure. Every time since, when I see something on TV about gun violence or that someone got shot, it's very alerting to me. I think something has to be done about that.

This past August, a young woman was shot and killed in my riding near, I think, Wellington and Spadina. She was a young college graduate walking home from work. I think she was a new immigrant from Croatia, working and looking after her elderly aunt. She was a victim of gun violence, at a very young age with a bright future, and has now perished because of illegal handguns.

There was another, closer incident that just happened a few weeks ago, on Dundas Street. In both incidents, the police suspect that a vehicle was used as either a drop-off or getaway car. I think the member's bill will address that, making sure that the police, our brave men and women, have the tools that they need to protect us and protect our kids. I think, from a parent's perspective, it's a very good bill, and I look forward to supporting that.

I also want to speak to it as a member of a community. We all know that Trinity-Spadina has a lot of tourist attractions. It's a great downtown riding, just like the neighbouring riding of Toronto Centre. We have a lot of tourists coming to our community to take a look at all the special heritage. Whenever we hear about a shooting, especially a drive-by shooting, it gives us such a bad reputation. People think that Toronto is not safe, but the fact is our city has never been safer, and we've seen a steady decrease in violence. But it's this kind of crime and the way it's carried out that is giving our community a very bad reputation. So I look forward to supporting this bill.

I'm going to share my time with my colleague from this side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm going to be very short in my remarks, and I thank the member from Eglinton-Lawrence for bringing this forward.

I do have a few comments, and I'm a little confused with some of the terminology that is used. One concerns an "unlawful handgun." An unlawful handgun doesn't have to be stolen. In my understanding of it, if you don't have the permits to have a handgun and it's in your car, that's an unlawful handgun. So I think there are some problems with the terminology and how it's going to be interpreted. There are prohibited and restricted weapons, and certainly you can find them in the Criminal Code, which I did some research on. I think we have to understand what an unlawful handgun is and whether it just refers to stolen guns, unregistered guns or where a person has no permit for the guns. We have to understand those types of things before this can go on.

But another thing I'd like to point out to the member is that a couple of OPP that I know of have been killed where I'm from. One happened back in the late 1960s. They drove out to a domestic dispute in the country—the justice of the peace was with him—and the officer was shot. He was sitting in his car when he got shot. The

justice of the peace ran, and he was also shot. That was not with an unlawful handgun; it was with a rifle.

The other incident happened a couple of years ago near the little town of Walton, which is just west of where I live. The OPP were looking for a car, again involved in another domestic dispute. The officer found the car. He turned around to pursue the vehicle. The vehicle stopped, and just as the officer went to get out of the car, the fellow in the pickup truck got out and shot him in the head and killed him—again, with a rifle.

So I think we need to think a little bit more about what you want to put into this bill, because a weapon of any type, if it's unlawful and used in the commission of a crime—maybe you should look at this and add it to this bill. That's one of the things that I think is quite important to this, because there are more unlawful weapons around than just handguns.

I understand the theory you used on drive-by shootings. I understand that type of thing, but I do believe that some other things should be looked at.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to support my colleague's Bill 24.

The member from Eglinton-Lawrence is passionate about this issue of keeping our roads safe across Ontario. I know he's been very passionate about this issue. I remember him contacting those of us who live in the city of Toronto about this kind of safety in our community.

He made a comment earlier in his opening remarks about the tragedy involving Andrea White, a mother of four who was killed while sitting in her house in a drive-by shooting. It did not just destroy Andrea White's family; the families of the two accused also have been destroyed. Very clearly, these kinds of tragedy also are preventable—not just the victim but also the two young accused. So this is a very, very important piece of legislation and discussion that we're having here today.

I too hear my colleague's comment about supporting the proposed Bill 24. One piece that really concerns me, which the member from Eglinton-Lawrence is talking about, is the accessibility of these illegal handguns and their being portable and travelling across the province, because we know there are no gates or barriers to transporting anything in Ontario. The proposed legislation, if passed, will amend the Highway Traffic Act, under the new section 172.2, making it an offence to drive having unlawful guns in your possession.

I think the member from Eglinton-Lawrence talked earlier about the fact that criminals will use every excuse under the sun to transport—using the vehicle as a way to transport—these unlawful weapons. It affects all of us. I don't think there is one community in 107 ridings in Ontario that has not been affected by this kind of unfortunate tragedy.

I applaud the member from Eglinton-Lawrence for his leadership on this piece about keeping our community safe. And I know the member from Niagara Falls has also

spoken about the fact that the law enforcement community is supportive of our proposed legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I will point out that an earlier version of this bill—it was back in 2008—wasn't specific to only handguns. It covered firearms and other long guns. As was pointed out earlier, removing long guns from this would remove other categories of restricted and prohibited firearms. I'm using the federal definition, which could be a machine gun or an AK-47.

I had an incident in my riding. A fellow let loose with an AK-47 from the seat of his car, sitting on a provincial highway, Highway 6. You could probably guess, this happened in Caledonia. There was no police news release about this. There was nothing in the papers about this. It was covered up. But this is a case where this goes on. He shot up a smoke shack. I happened to be at a meeting at West Haldimand hospital when his victim was brought in. It almost ripped his arm off. So that is the other side of this.

I do support the intention of this bill. Again, I have questions as to how it can be enforced, how practical would it be; how can it achieve its goal? I don't know whether it is worth spending time on new legislation around taking a vehicle away when a criminal act like this requires jail time. I mean, take the freedom away—maybe not focusing on the vehicle.

As I've suggested, firearms control falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government. The Supreme Court of Canada confirmed this when Alberta wanted to opt out of the federal Liberals' gun registry. So if you are nailed with an illegal firearm in a vehicle or outside of a vehicle—if you're riding a horse, for example, which would not be covered by this legislation—you will face federal laws, as I understand it.

The Supreme Court of Canada decided that firearms law, again, is the responsibility of the federal, so I question why we'd debate this in the provincial Legislature. I question its constitutionality, as federal laws already exist to deal with prohibited and restricted firearms, the various classes of firearms.

I am concerned. We know that those who have a permit for restricted—i.e. in most cases, a handgun—travel. They travel in a vehicle to a gun range. They are a member of a sportsmen's club. They've been vetted. They pay a fee—these clubs are very heavily supervised. I wouldn't want to see a jackpot where somebody is giving somebody a ride somewhere—maybe it's in a taxi or maybe it's a rental car, and he doesn't know the guy has a firearm in the trunk; maybe the permit has lapsed. It seems to open up an awful lot of confusion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak on Bill 24 regarding the unlawful possession of handguns in vehicles. I applaud the member, but the problem with guns is not only in Toronto. It's right across Ontario, and it's happening

more and more—where people get guns, go out with their car and start shooting from their car.

I looked up some cases. There are almost 100 pages this year alone of different drive-by shootings that occurred by people who were in their cars and decided to just shoot out of nowhere. For example, one headline in the Windsor Star says, "Man with Bag of Guns Sentenced to Three Years in Jail; Kooner Seeks Bail on Appeal."

"Five years after pitching a bag of guns and ammunition out the window of a moving car," the victim "began serving a penitentiary term...." What was happening was that they were shooting at each other, and the one who tried to get away threw his guns out—a bag of guns, rather. They caught him, but they're still in the middle of a court hearing. These were all this year.

Another headline reads, "Prime Suspect Arrested after Gang-Related Shooting." This is in Kanata, Ontario. The police "guns and gangs section" responded to eyewitness statements that there was a shooting going on on the streets, in vehicles that were passing each other.

It's not just here that we talk about it; it's all over Ontario.

There's one headline here, "Man Shot near Richmond Hill Restaurant Had Survived Previous Attack." Again, it's a story where his SUV was shot at, and the person was killed in the car by another car that was driving by. This was in Richmond Hill—all sorts of cases from all over Ontario.

"Man Killed in 'Brazen' Shooting in Toronto Plaza Third Sibling from Same Family to Die." This is in Toronto, and it says that the person was only 15 when his brother and sister "were gunned down nine months apart in horrific shootings that both made headlines."

"Now, a dozen years later," the victim "met a similar fate and becomes the third sibling ... to die" from bullets fired from a car.

The problem is—and the newspapers are saying that—that it's an issue all across Ontario. There's news that comes out every day, but it gets mixed in with other headlines from around the world. What this bill does is that it distills everything down to what's important: handguns in cars.

People are getting access to these handguns illegally, to keep them in the car, and it's very hard to be able to monitor them. A lot of these handguns are brought up from the United States—imported. They're hidden in the car, and they decide to go after someone or a gang—let's say a gang—and what they do is that they shoot outside their car.

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Even though there are all sorts of other things that could be done, I think that, in terms of the weapons, the handguns are the easiest way. They can hide in the car, bring them to where they're going to shoot, fire and get rid of the gun or else keep the gun in the car and run away. This year alone, I found over 60 cases, all over Ontario, where handguns were being used in cars—shooting.

I think this bill is important to pass, so we can be able to at least bring in some law to stop guns in cars.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am also honoured to add my voice to the debate.

I want to make one thing very, very clear: Obviously, all members in this House want to do whatever is possible to reduce crime; all members in this House also support any initiatives we can bring forward that would reduce gun violence. I think that's one thing we can all take away from this debate; we all support that.

We all have tragedies in our ridings or in our communities, where gun violence has stolen the lives of members of our community. We're sorry for that, and we express our condolences for those who have lost their lives to these tragedies. It's completely unacceptable. So we stand united on that.

When it comes to addressing this problem, there are various approaches we can take. Absolutely, in certain circumstances, we need to make sure we have the correct tools—those tools are legislation; those are laws—to ensure that we can protect our communities. Absolutely, we need laws to enforce the rule of law to make sure our communities are safe.

But we'd be doing a disservice to those who have lost their lives, and we'd be doing a disservice to the violence that is prevalent in our community, if we didn't look to the root causes of this violence. It's very clear. The evidence is unequivocal. The evidence leaves no doubt that crime, particularly violent crime, is linked to socio-economic factors. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

While we must have laws that actually protect our community—absolutely—we must also recognize the steps we can take as a government, as a society, to address the root causes. Like anything, if you only look at the symptoms and address the symptoms, there is no way to prevent the actual recurrence of that phenomenon. What I'm suggesting in this debate, in the time that I have, is that I want to add my voice to support the initiative to reduce crime, but to suggest some solutions.

If you look across the world, we have countless examples of countries that have far lower rates of crime than others, and we have evidence about why that occurs.

The country that has the highest rate of incarceration, some of the most strict forms of laws and some of the highest numbers of police officers, has one of the highest crime rates in the world. This is the United States of America. They have one of the highest rates of incarceration in the entire world. They have some of the strictest laws. They have a large population of police officers. But they have one of the highest rates of crime.

We know that, strictly speaking, incarceration isn't a solution. We know that, strictly speaking, just increasing the number of police officers isn't the solution, because we have evidence from what has happened in the United States.

On the contrary, we have examples like Iceland. The entire country of Iceland has 200 prisoners—200 people who are in prison in the entire country. They have 700

people on their police force, and if you match the per capita rate of violence, they are among the lowest in the world, even factoring in their lower population. It's not because of the strictness of their laws; it's because of the social services. It's because people who have access to education, who have access to housing, who have access to opportunities, who have access to hope—and who have hope—are less likely to be in a situation where they are desperate and less likely to commit crimes of violence. That's the evidence. We have that in a number of examples across the world.

We have countries like Norway, which also has some of the lowest rates of violent crime in the world, in comparison to their population. Again, it's not because of their strict laws, it's not because of their rates of incarceration and it's not because of the number of police they have.

While I support, of course, that we need to have police and we need to have laws that protect our society, we need to look at the underlying factors that create crime, that cause crime, and those are socio-economic. Those are poverty, those are child poverty, those are lack of education, lack of access to education. We need to address those underlying causes, and then we can truly address this serious problem that we face.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Mike Colle: I appreciate all the very thoughtful comments by everybody today. I just want to try and respond to a couple of them.

To the member from Thornhill, I couldn't agree more. Peer pressure is incredibly powerful for young people. It's just overwhelming. You try and be a parent and talk to your teenager: It's very, very difficult.

The member from Niagara Falls mentioned the front-line police officers who do this 24/7. They know they need more tools to do their job. They are just trying to do their job, and they just want to be protected on the job. It's job safety, almost, for the police officers. You ask any police officer in Niagara Falls or Toronto or Windsor, and they'll say, "Hey, listen, we just want to do our job and be safe on the job." This is about job safety in many ways.

The member for Trinity–Spadina talked about children being exposed to gunfire. That's not a rare occurrence anymore because of the proliferation of guns.

The member from Perth–Wellington talked about the definition of "unlawful handgun." Well, I did work with the legal branch here and I worked with the legal experts at the OPP, and the definition is one that they agreed to. That could be changed if there is another definition of "unlawful handgun." Basically, if you don't have a permit and if you're not a police officer and you're not in the army, you shouldn't have a gun on you. That's basically what the law is.

The member from Scarborough–Agincourt talked about poor Andrea White, who was killed in cold blood in front of her house. We've got to think about her.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk talked about jurisdiction. All I know is that the thugs and criminals know the Criminal Code isn't working here. Every time they get stopped with a gun in their car, they get off. They know it's a joke. At least this gives another obstacle, you might say, to these criminals. Right now our laws are not working because they can just say, "I borrowed the car." They walk. They're walking every day because we've got a very weak Criminal Code when it comes to gun possession in vehicles. It's basically a sieve. It's not even a law anymore, and the criminals know it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member for Scarborough Southwest talked about typical—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

LYME DISEASE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We will deal with the first ballot item, number 16, standing in the name of Mr. Mantha.

Mr. Mantha has moved private member's notice of motion number 13.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

WATER FLUORIDATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Delaney has moved private member's notice of motion number 10.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PROHIBITING DRIVING WITH UNLAWFUL HANDGUNS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INTERDICTION DE LA CONDUITE AVEC DES ARMES DE POING ILLÉGALES DANS LE VÉHICULE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Colle has moved second reading of Bill 24, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Civil Remedies Act, 2001 to promote public safety by prohibiting driving in a motor vehicle with an unlawfully possessed handgun.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, which committee would you like your bill referred to?

Mr. Mike Colle: I would like the bill to be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Does the House agree? Agreed.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / *Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): When this item of business was last debated, the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton had the floor with time remaining. I recognize the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All right, we have 27 minutes, folks. Sit back and enjoy. We'll get into some details around Bill 35.

When I left off, I was talking about some of the concerns I had with Bill 35. Just to lay out the outline of what I want to share with you: Essentially, you have the Public Works Protection Act. That act was seriously flawed. It was the cause of some serious civil rights violations. In fact, the Ombudsman of Ontario, André Marin, said it was one of the worst civil rights violations in our history. All sorts of folks spoke about this. There was a report commissioned by the government, and it had Justice McMurtry respond to the issues around the Public Works Protection Act. There were some serious issues.

Namely, one of the major issues with the existing act was that it was too broad. It provided too broad a range of powers to the police. The issue was that if you provide overly broad powers to the police, the police can then abuse those powers and it can result in infringements of your civil liberties. So, overly broad powers are problematic. Justice McMurtry also said that if you provide someone with a vague set of powers, you don't actually delineate specifically what those powers allow you to do,

you don't specifically say, "You have the right to do" this narrow area or this narrow level of search or this narrow interpretation of the law. So, specific and clear—then you would be in a good position—but if it's not clear and specific language, then it leaves it open to interpretation, and what can happen as a result is that you can see some serious violations.

Well, last time around, a number of stakeholders voiced their concern. They said that there were some serious problems with this bill. The bill is largely—there have been some amendments and there have been some changes, and I acknowledge that. That has taken the bill a step forward and made it better. It has improved the bill. But there still remains a significant number of problems that will go contrary to the entire intention of getting rid of the Public Works Protection Act. Put simply, you're getting rid of a bill that had problems in it to replace it with a new bill that has a lot of the same problems. It doesn't make a lot of sense, does it? If you acknowledge that an existing act is not good and it's problematic because it has certain broad and vague elements to it, then why would you introduce a new bill that has similarly vague and broad powers?

A number of stakeholders spoke about this. One of those was the Ontario Bar Association. They submitted some remarks on April 19, 2012. They submitted them to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. In their analysis of the bill, they noted a number of areas of concern; and some of those concerns have been addressed, and they appreciate that, as well as I. They specifically spoke about the issue of vagueness, that a vague law is a bad law, basically put. If you have a law that is vague, there is a high likelihood that it's going to be abused or misused, so it's better to avoid that in the first place and make sure the law is not vague and is actually clear.

In their comments, they mentioned the fact that vagueness was an issue, underneath their remarks around other constitutional and legal principles to be addressed. They mentioned vagueness as one of those. In specific, they said one of the problems with the PWPA from a constitutionality perspective was that it contained terms, such as "any approach" to a public work, that were vague. As Mr. McMurtry wrote, "Vague laws offend two fundamental values of our legal system. Firstly, individuals are not provided with sufficient guidance as to what behaviour a law prohibits. Secondly, those in charge of enforcing the law are not provided with clear guidance as to how to enforce it. A vague law can lead to inconsistent and arbitrary enforcement."

That's exactly what happened in G20. There was inconsistent and extremely arbitrary enforcement of the law. In G20, people were rounded up for just being on the streets. People were rounded up; they were detained. Just to understand this concept, they were placed in makeshift metal pens. They were rounded up, often in situations where they weren't even involved in a protest; and even if they were involved in a protest, we should support the right to dissent. That's a fundamental part of democracy. So people who were protesting and some

people who weren't were rounded up and placed in metal pens and kept there for three days, and largely the reason was because the laws that this government used, the Public Works Protection Act, were too vague and too broad. Because they were too vague and too broad, the police enforced them in a very arbitrary and inconsistent manner. They took away the rights of people they shouldn't have, they detained people without any right, they took away people's civil liberties, and there was really no recourse. People didn't get any remedy for that. It was one of the worst of its kind in the history of Canada.

So if you accept Justice McMurtry's report that says vagueness was a problem—he specifically points to the vagueness of the Public Works Protection Act and says that it's a problem; it shouldn't be vague, and it resulted in some of the infringements that we saw—then why would you include it in this bill?

The Ontario Bar Association goes on to say, "The bill"—this bill—"contains similarly vague terms that require further definition in order to make the court security provisions compliant with constitutional principles and the rule of law. These provisions include those highlighted below...." The Ontario Bar Association goes on to specifically highlight that one of the major concerns was under section 138.(1)1, point number ii: "to provide information for the purpose of assessing whether the person poses a security risk."

So you're required, to get into the courthouse—these are powers that you are conferring upon the police. The power is conferred in this manner that says that to enter into a courthouse, the individual who is going to screen you to enter in, whether it's a police officer or someone else designated by the Police Services Act—that person can require you to provide information. What information, what sort of information—none of that is clarified by this law.

Broadly speaking, "provide information" could be anything. To provide information for what purpose? Maybe the purpose would narrow it a bit, make it a bit more clear, less vague, less broad: "for the purpose of assessing whether the person poses a security risk." That could be anything. That's so subjective. There are no guidelines there. It doesn't say that we need to provide information as to whether or not they have a weapon. That would be narrow, that would be defined, that would be clear, so that the individual who is enforcing this law would say, "Okay, I can only obtain any information that would help me assess whether they have a weapon or not." I still think there are some problems with the wording, but at least that would be clear language. That would help you obtain your objective, which is to make sure the courthouses are safe, which is the objective of all of us.

But the way it's currently worded is so broad, here are some of the scenarios that could occur: "to provide information for the purpose of assessing" could be anything. They could say: "What court are you going to? What case are you here to hear? Why are you at the

courthouse? Why do you have an interest in that particular case?" How does that protect people in the courthouse?

Good police work is based on evidence, investigation and building up a case, and if there are reasonable grounds, then to arrest somebody. These are the steps. You want to have evidence that builds a case in a meaningful, thoughtful way. Fishing expeditions have been said to be, time and time again, unconstitutional, improper and not the right way to engage in investigations and not, frankly, the right way to engage in creating a safer society, workplace or, specifically in this case, a courthouse.

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If it's not the way we need to go, if we don't want to have fishing expeditions, we don't want to have broad powers without any real guidance in terms of what their goal is. If there's no connection between the right conferred and the objective, then why are you doing it?

I spoke before about the importance of an open courthouse. I want to touch upon that and provide you with some guidance in terms of some of the laws that have been passed and some of the decisions that have been made in this country with respect to the idea of an open courthouse. Simply put, if we live in a democratic society, a democratic society has a number of hallmarks or a number of signs, a number of indicia, things that you can look to and say, "Yes, that's a democracy." They have these things. They have certain things in them so you can tell that this is a democracy. Some of those things are, for example, the right to vote. Broadly speaking, all people being able to vote is a sign of some democracy. Having free and open elections is a sign of democracy.

Another sign of a democracy—an important sign—is that a democracy should have the rule of law, meaning that there can't be arbitrary decisions. It's not just, "Because I don't like that person, I'm going to put that person in jail," or, "Just because I don't like the colour of their shirt, they're not allowed to walk into this building over here." Those are arbitrary decisions. Instead, if you have the rule of law, the rule of law means there's a law that applies equally to all people in a fair and just manner so that you know what to expect. You know that these are the laws and they're not going to be arbitrarily applied to me and not applied to someone else. You know that there will be a uniformity, a consistency, about the laws. That's the rule of law.

In addition to the rule of law, to have faith in the administration of justice: Basically, to believe that the laws are being enacted in a meaningful way or in a way that actually serves justice, then you need make sure that where justice is dealt, where these decisions are made, people are able to walk into those places. In a democratic society, you want to be able to go and see justice unfold. You want the ability to go into a courthouse and see how it is that the rule of law is actually, in a practical sense, being implemented. The open court principle and access to courthouses is essentially a fundamental principle of

all democracies, but particularly it's something very important to us here in Canada.

Two years ago, when this law was first introduced on April 19, 2012, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and at that time Nathalie Des Rosiers, the general counsel, and Abby Deshman, director of the public safety program for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, presented at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy in regard to, at the time, Bill 34, which was the previous iteration of this current bill, Bill 35. In their remarks, they spoke about the importance of an open justice system—an open court principle—and the idea of access to courthouses. They write, on page 2 of the report, "The open court principle is essential to the maintenance of a fair and functional justice system and must be a central consideration when evaluating the reasonableness and impact of courthouse security."

What are guiding principles? If we're looking at courthouse security, two things need to guide us. The major thing that should guide us is the open court principle. This should be our central consideration when we look at: What is a reasonable type of law to be applied? What is a reasonable infringement on individual liberties? What makes sense?

When we're looking at what makes sense to implement in court security, we need to look at the open court principle. In fact, the open court principle was reaffirmed a number of times, specifically by the highest court in Canada, the Supreme Court of Canada. Later on, on page 2 of this report, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association states very clearly, "The Supreme Court of Canada has repeatedly emphasized the importance of this presumptive openness." In the report, they continue to say, "Just last year the Court unanimously reaffirmed the rationale behind this principle" in the decision *Vancouver Sun (Re)*, [2004], a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada, with comments from Justice Iacobucci and Justice Arbour. The court found that:

"The open court principle is of crucial importance in a democratic society. It ensures that citizens have access to the courts and can, as a result, comment on how the courts operate and on proceedings that take place in them. Public access to the courts also guarantees the integrity of judicial processes inasmuch as the transparency that flows from access ensures that justice is rendered in a manner that is not arbitrary, but is in accordance with the rule of law."

People, the public, play an important role in ensuring that we have a transparent courthouse. But, more importantly, they actually assist in maintaining the rule of law. They act as a check and balance—an informal check and balance—on our judicial system.

The Supreme Court of Canada, the highest court of Canada, makes it very clear that an open courthouse is essential, is fundamental. It's something that is so important that we can never look away from that importance; we can never undermine that importance—public access, accessibility, the ability to go to court.

That's why I turn your attention again to why you, as a government, would include in this law a provision that

requires people to have to provide information before they can get into a courthouse. Why would you do that? It makes no sense. It contravenes the principle of an open court. It contravenes the idea of having a transparent courthouse. In fact, it goes against the idea of a true democracy.

There are so many other ways to do this. There are so many other ways to address this issue. It's not necessary to require such an onerous burden.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association goes on to provide specific criticism of this broad requirement to provide information.

We've already indicated that the Ontario Bar Association, in their submission to the justice committee back in 2012, raised concerns around the vagueness of it. The Ontario Bar Association represents thousands of members, thousands of lawyers, across the province. Some of the greatest legal minds of our province are represented. Some 18,000 lawyers, judges, law professors and students in Ontario make up the Ontario Bar Association. With the weight of that association, they raise this concern around access to courts, a very important civil liberties issue.

The minister, the House leader, gets up in this House and says, "We're balancing civil liberties with security." I say, very openly, that you are not balancing those interests. We have a number of civil liberties experts who say that you're not. I challenge you to show me how you are, when we have evidence, we have legal minds who have looked at this and said, "No, this is not balancing civil liberties."

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, on page 5 of their submission to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, indicates the broad requirements to provide information: "Similar to the identification requirement, Bill 34 would also give officers the power to require a person to 'provide information for the purposes of assessing whether the person poses a security risk'.... This amendment seemingly confers extremely broad powers of mandatory interrogation that could be used to inquire into any aspect of a person's life upon entry into a courthouse."

I need to emphasize that once more. In response to this broad provision, this overly broad power which Justice McMurtry criticized—Justice McMurtry said very clearly that the problem with the PWPA was that it was too broad; it was too vague. This law is also too broad and too vague. We have the Ontario Bar Association stating it very clearly.

In addition, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, which is well respected for being a bastion of civil liberties, for standing up for civil liberties, justice and rights, is stating very clearly that this provision, which requires you to "provide information for the purposes of assessing whether the person poses a security risk ... seemingly confers extremely broad powers of mandatory interrogation that could be used to inquire into any aspect of a person's life upon entry into a courthouse." It continues, to say, "Members of the public should not

have to subject themselves to a fishing expedition aimed at revealing whether or not they pose a 'security threat' in order to access public courtrooms, provide testimony, or otherwise participate in the justice system." That's what you're doing. You're requiring people to subject themselves to an interrogation, potentially. You're requiring people to subject themselves to a fishing expedition, potentially.

1650

This law does not balance civil liberties at all. You have learned nothing from the problems that your government created under G20, specifically with respect to what Justice McMurtry said: that the PWPA is problematic because it's too vague, it's too broad. Your bill is too vague and too broad. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association states that, that it's actually an infringement on civil liberties. Why would you do that? Why would you replace a law that infringed people's civil liberties with a new law that also infringes people's civil liberties? It boggles the mind that after so much criticism, after so much loss of rights, you would do something of this nature.

It's not like you didn't see this coming. This is from two years ago. Two years ago, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association clearly stated that this is not right; there's a problem here. They clearly stated this. The problems haven't gone away. This was two years ago. So why didn't you address this issue?

Now, you might state that, "This seemed to be the only way. This was the only way we could do it. We had to balance the interest of security." Well, the CCLA did a wonderful job of comparing across the provinces and territories. I note the minister is present. In the province of Manitoba, they have one of the best court security acts in the country, the Manitoba Court Security Act. That court security act is efficient. It creates a high level of security, and in no way requires any of these intrusive, civil-liberty-violating principles or amendments that components of this bill have.

The Manitoba security act doesn't require you to identify yourself to enter the courthouse. The Manitoba security act doesn't require you to provide information so that someone can assess your level of risk. They don't require that. In fact, the CCLA did a comparison of nine other provinces and one territory. This is important: nine other provinces and one other territory. They found that none of the legislative frameworks give security officials a general power to demand information. So you'll be another first. Out of these nine provinces and one territory, you'll be the first to require that someone provide information before they get into a courthouse. Congratulations: You're the first. You're the first to do that. Nine other provinces and one territory—none of them have this provision which requires you to provide information just to get into a public space. None of them have that. I repeat that: None of them have that. You're the first province that will bring that in. That is so unacceptable.

In fact, none of these other nine provinces and one territory have a legislative framework authorizing

random vehicle searches, as your bill has. Why are you doing this? I don't understand. This is not civil liberties. This is not social justice. It's just simply not.

Again, if there was an evidentiary basis for it—if you're, like, "You know what? We have a lot of evidence that shows that if you search cars in the parking lot of a courthouse, you can prevent things from happening." There is no evidence to back that up. None of the security threats that have ever come across this province involved issues around searching the courthouse parking lot. They just don't. That's not the issue. The issue is, you don't want people bringing dangerous materials into the courthouse. That is all it is. And that's what your law should say. The law should be very clear that you're only screening people—not searching them broadly, just screening them—so that people don't bring in any sort of dangerous material, they don't bring in dangerous weapons, they don't bring in flammable material, they don't bring in explosives. That's all it should be, really. What else do you need to say?

And that's how courthouses work right now. There are metal detectors in some courthouses. You walk through that, there's a wand process, your bag gets metal-detector searched—not actually pried through and people look through it, but it goes through a conveyor belt and it's searched. That's not intrusive. That's acceptable. That makes sense. That's what goes on right now. You walk through a metal detector. That also makes sense. You get wanded down sometimes with the metal-detecting wand. That also makes sense.

Why would you include these extra provisions? You have to identify yourself and you have to provide information to the person screening you or the person searching you. Why? There is no basis for that.

So I can state very clearly that there is a distinct departure from our position that courts should be open and transparent, that people should be able to access courts, and your position where you want to place some of the most draconian laws in the entire country, some of the most draconian laws in the country, to limit and impede people's ability to go into a courthouse. That's all this does. It's impeding people's ability to get into a courthouse. It's limiting and barring access to justice.

That's contrary to what democracy is founded on. Democracy is founded on open courts. The only places where they don't have open courts are the places where they don't have democracies. Everywhere they have open courts is where they have a democracy. So I am questioning whether or not you believe in this principle, because you're creating a barrier unnecessarily.

There are some other folks who weighed in on this, so it's not just my opinion. I openly state that this is clearly unfair and wrong, but I've cited from the Ontario Bar Association and I've cited from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. I'll also cite from or reference the Toronto Lawyers Association. The Toronto Lawyers Association, otherwise known as the TLA, has in excess of 3,000 members making up the Toronto bar of lawyers. These are lawyers who practise in the Toronto jurisdic-

tion. They're referred to as the voice of Toronto lawyers. These individuals are the voice of Toronto lawyers. So we have the voice of Ontario lawyers in the Ontario Bar Association, we have the voice of the champions of civil liberties, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, and now we have the Toronto Lawyers Association.

So again, this is not just my opinion. These are the opinions of some far more intelligent minds than mind, far more experienced minds than mine, and people who have a proven track record of standing up for civil liberties. They also state very clearly their concerns around this bill.

Again, the Toronto Lawyers Association made a submission to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy on April 13, 2012; again, two years ago. The Toronto Lawyers Association stated very clearly on page 2 of their report, "The provisions that ... concern TLA are those that permit a police officer to do the following"—these are the provisions that the TLA are concerned with, the Toronto Lawyers Association, the voice of Toronto lawyers. They indicate that these are the areas they're concerned with: "(1) Require a person who is entering or attempting to enter premises where court proceedings are conducted or who is on such premises ... (ii) to provide information for the purpose of assessing whether the person poses a security risk."

They also have the same problem. So it's not just me. It's the Toronto Lawyers Association, it's the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and it's the Ontario Bar Association. These are serious problems.

One thing that I want to make very clear and that I'm very proud of: The Ontario New Democratic Party worked very hard, and I was very honoured to submit this accommodation provision and amendment, which was amended and which was carried, which requires the court to allow an accommodation for religious freedoms, accommodations in connection with their creed or disability. I'm very honoured that that was passed, and that is one definite improvement of this bill, but there is still much that needs to be improved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I appreciate the member's concern about liberty. I just want to make a few points here. One is, critically, that we were operating under legislation that was World War II and Cold War legislation, which was totally inadequate for that. We were also operating at the time—and I think I spoke out on this; Mayor Miller, the mayor of Toronto at the time, spoke out—of probably the most ridiculous location to have an international summit, with most of the world's major leaders in a place where there were more gun points from every building, more passageways, more sewers, more subways, more ability to actually move in and out. It was the hardest place to protect. We were dealing with inadequate legislation.

I think that moving forward on this bill is so important, especially before the Pan Am Games. We do not have very civil-liberty-sensitive legislation in most prov-

inces. I lived in Manitoba through the Pan Am Games, and we had similar problems with that. This is all long overdue. We can point fingers, but a lot of us have been on this side of the House and it didn't happen.

1700

What I'm most concerned about—and, out of this, what I've been on the campaign for with some of my federal members, in both parties, including members of the third party federally—is to restore the Canadian charter challenges program and restore the funding. No one could take the federal government to court. We never got answers out of the federal government. We had independent police inquiries and we had independent inquiries at the provincial level; there was no federal inquiry. These were all CSIS- and RCMP-run things. That is what is really concerning me.

This is the kind of legislation that we should bring forward. What was actually, when I was growing up, liberty and freedom has now become privacy, and privacy, as far as the Internet and government intervention, is almost dead. Getting a Canadian charter Court Challenges Program in the Human Rights Code would actually reactivate the Human Rights Code and make it the legislation that we need to actually protect ourselves. In that, my friend from Brampton and I are of one mind.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: We echo that. We're going to be supporting this particular bill, but I'd like to share with you that we feel on our side of the House that it's straightforward legislation that addresses the recommendations made by former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry in the wake of the G20 fiasco.

It's unfortunate that it has taken nearly three years—again, I stress that it's unfortunate that it has taken nearly three years—since new legislation was first introduced to get to this point, to replace archaic powers. The outdated Public Works Protection Act included, as just mentioned, wartime powers for the protection of public infrastructure from saboteurs, but relied too heavily on the discretion of the minister.

The former Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the McGuinty cabinet used that discretion to secretly introduce secret powers of arrest during the 2010 G20 summit. The Liberal government failed to take responsibility for the widespread confusion that followed the introduction of these powers. This legislation removes the minister's discretion to grant special powers of arrest, but it does not address, sadly, the lack of sound judgment demonstrated by the McGuinty cabinet during and in the wake of the G20 summit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to follow the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and his intricacy when working on this bill. I believe that this is the third time that this bill has been in front of us. I could be mistaken, if it's our second, but I'm thinking that it's the third.

That's a problem, because the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has consistently brought forward concerns and has talked—the Toronto Lawyer Association, the civil liberties association and the Canadian Bar Association, and this government has still failed to make those changes. I think that that's a real problem here in this House, because other people were elected, just the same as the people across the hallway.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton is a lawyer. This is something that is right in his district, and is something that he knows quite a bit about. Like I said, he has brought great substance to this debate. He has brought great options forward. I'm happy to see that there were changes that were made in the bill that he brought forward when it came to religious entitlement; what a huge success that was, so I congratulate him on that. I just wish that the government would be listening when it came to other matters.

Identifying people when they come into the courtroom—think about the victims who are in those lineups. Who are the people who are behind them? Is it people who are of concern to that victim? Is it the press who are behind that victim? We have to really be considering what it is and the position that we're putting people in, in this province. Are we doing the justice that needs to be done? Yes, we need safety in our country and in our province, and we need to make sure that we have a safe environment, but we also have to make sure that people's identities are also safe at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. I recognize the member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to support Bill 35. I want to comment on the comments made by my colleague opposite from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. He needs to remember that he sat on the same committee as me back in 2011, having this debate. Fifteen MPPs from all three parties have already had an opportunity to speak about this bill. We also had 19 hours of debate on this particular bill during nine days of debate.

If the third party hadn't forced the recent provincial election, this bill may have been passed. Let's call a spade a spade. We know that we have to pass this bill, and everybody agrees in this House. I think it's time for this bill to move to committee so that it will be further strengthened and then come back for a final vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Randy Pettapiece): The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has two minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank all the members for joining in the debate. Thank you for your comments. I really appreciate it.

I want to just reiterate how proud I am of what we were able to do as a party and what we were able to achieve.

The bill, as it was initially written, didn't have any provisions for folks with disabilities or for people with religious articles of faith or other forms of religious

expression. There wasn't an accommodation for those folks. I'm very proud that our party stood up and put forward an amendment in committee when this bill was first introduced, and I'm so proud of our work to introduce an amendment that required a reasonable accommodation. We put forward that accommodation because we believed that courts should be open and accessible to all people regardless of creed or disability. We put forward that accommodation, and that accommodation found its way into this bill. That's a significant success for us, and we're really proud of that achievement.

We're really proud that now, moving forward, this bill actually includes an accommodation factoring in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, factoring in the Human Rights Code and requiring that courts accommodate people based on their creed or disability. That's a phenomenal success story. That's something we're so proud of. New Democrats pushed for that. We fought for that and we were successful in achieving that.

I want to just take a moment to reflect on that achievement, but at the same time, to make it very clear that this is my first time to speak on this new introduction of this bill. Two years ago, there were significant issues raised. There were serious problems raised about this bill's infringement on civil liberties. I want to make it absolutely clear to the members opposite and everyone in this House: There are serious problems with this bill. This bill was brought in with an attempt to rectify the civil liberty violations of another law, and now this law itself has the potential for some serious civil liberty violations.

Don't make another mistake and create a new law that can violate rights once again. Let's get it right this time. Let's make sure that our courts are open, transparent and accessible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Randy Pettapiece): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to participate in this important debate on Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014.

Might I say, Mr. Speaker, you look very distinguished in the chair. You do credit to your predecessor, Bert Johnson, who for many years was an outstanding Deputy Speaker in the Legislature. You're doing him proud by participating, and I thank you for filling in for me for a few minutes this afternoon too. We're a bit short-handed this week, and everybody is pitching in. It's great to see you there.

This important debate was commenced again on October 30, 2014, when the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services introduced Bill 35 in this Legislature. I thought it was interesting, when I was trying to research through Hansard, that it appears to me that we couldn't find that the minister even did a ministerial statement the day that he introduced the bill.

As you know, normally when a government bill is introduced in the House, the minister stands up that day and gives a statement of some sort about the bill, and members of the Legislature are given the opportunity to respond, in a preliminary sense, to the bill. In this case, there appeared not to be a ministerial statement. Certainly he gave a bit of a presentation when second reading of the bill was commenced, but, at the same time, he didn't speak for very long.

It's interesting how the government is, in this fall sitting, not necessarily interested in debating the legislation that it's bringing into the House and is starting to routinely use time allocations to shut down debate. I would ask them, on this important issue, not to bring in time allocation. I think there should be an opportunity for members of this House to participate in the debate. We have an obligation on behalf of our constituents. There are 107 of us here; we all represent ridings. You would think that we would all get a chance to participate in debate.

1710

I would again encourage the government, not only to listen to the debate that is taking place in the House, but to allow the debate to take place and allow the members who wish to speak to the bill to have that opportunity.

As we know, one of the things this bill does is repeal the Public Works Protection Act. The government tells us that this bill is far narrower in scope and covers only limited categories of public infrastructure. As you know, Mr. Speaker—and you've heard, in the course of this debate—the repeal of the World War II-era Public Works Protection Act as part of this bill sets out a legislative amendment to the Police Services Act to address court security and to set out stand-alone legislation with respect to security at prescribed electricity generating and nuclear facilities.

Schedule 1 of the bill repeals the Public Works Protection Act. That's the act that was brought in at the time, I guess at the start of World War II, 75 years ago, to protect, I understand, some of our—it wouldn't have been nuclear in those days, but some of our electricity generating facilities, because there was a legitimate fear of enemy saboteurs coming into the country and wreaking havoc with their activities. So apparently the Legislature decided to move quickly to ensure that there was adequate protection for those facilities.

Also, this bill includes schedule 2, amendments to the Police Services Act to address court security. The proposed changes would ensure that court security guards have the power to require all those entering a courthouse to show identification and indicate their reason for being there, subject themselves to a search, if necessary, and, if deemed necessary, allow security officers to search the vehicle that they arrived in without a warrant. The bill also provides for penalties in the event that these things happen, and perhaps anyone refusing to identify themselves or failing to leave on demand could face fines of up to \$2,000 or imprisonment for up to 60 days.

Then, of course, we have schedule 3 of the bill, which enacts the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating

Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014. This provides for the appointment of security personnel as peace officers and sets out security regulations for electricity generating and nuclear facilities that are similar to those set out for courthouses.

Our caucus has expressed, obviously, a number of observations about this bill. This bill, we acknowledge, is straightforward legislation that appears to be a response in an attempt to address the recommendations made by former Chief Justice and former Attorney General Roy McMurtry, who served with distinction in this Legislature for many, many years and is someone who is held in, I think, high regard by all of us in this House. His recommendations followed the incident at the G20 in Toronto where a significant number of people were arrested after a protest that turned into, in some cases, a riot. Obviously there were a lot of questions asked afterwards, and Justice McMurtry was asked to review the matter and make recommendations to the government for the future.

It has apparently taken three years since he made his report for this legislation to get to this point, to replace the previous law, the outdated Public Works Protection Act. Again, that included wartime powers for the protection of public infrastructure from saboteurs, but we submit that it relied too heavily on the discretion of the minister and it had become outdated as well. So we use the word “archaic” when we talk about that piece of legislation, that is, in fact, being repealed by Bill 35, if it is passed by the House.

We know that the former Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the former McGuinty government used the discretion that was on the books as a result of the existence of the Public Works Protection Act to secretly introduce special powers of arrest during the G20 summit, which—again, it’s hard to believe—was four years ago, in 2010. We say that the Liberal government has failed to take responsibility for the widespread confusion that followed the introduction of these powers. We say that this legislation removes the minister’s discretion to grant special powers of arrest, but it does not address the lack of sound judgment demonstrated by the McGuinty cabinet during and in the wake of the G20 summit.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is really a new attempt to pass this legislation. Apparently, in the previous Parliament, it was Bill 34. I understand it was first introduced in February 2012. I understand several amendments were made after the bill was reviewed by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, but the bill died on the order paper. Bill 34 was then reintroduced as Bill 51 in April 2013, but that died on the order paper at second reading when the election was called.

Again, I would remind all members: I know we were all excited and paying attention to what was happening—those of us who were running for the first time and those of us who were seeking re-election—but the fact is that the New Democrat leader announced she would not be supporting the budget, and upon hearing that news, the Premier called the election. So, let’s not pretend that it

was the New Democrats who called the election. It’s actually the head of government who goes to the Lieutenant Governor seeking dissolution. That’s how it works in a parliamentary system of government. That’s how it has always worked. The Premier called the election.

It’s also true that the New Democrats said they weren’t going to vote for the budget. Another scenario might have been that we would have come back into the House, debated the budget and had a vote on the budget. If the vote had been defeated, the government would have been defeated in the House, because it’s a confidence motion. Then, again, the Premier would have been expected to go to the Lieutenant Governor to seek dissolution. That’s actually how it works. For the government members to try to suggest that the NDP called the election is just not true.

So we carry on with this bill. The fact is that the election took place, and the bill died on the order paper when the House was dissolved. We see no significant changes between last year’s Bill 51 and today’s Bill 35; just a small number of date changes and minor grammatical alterations. The bill was originally introduced due to events that followed the McGuinty cabinet’s decision, made in the lead-up to the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto, to invoke regulation 233/10 under the Public Works Protection Act, making the G20 zone a “public work” between June 21 and June 28.

Media coverage leading up to the summit circulated around reports of the police being granted special powers of arrest up to five metres on either side of the security fence in the G20 zone, which was requested by Toronto police chief Bill Blair. There had been widespread confusion leading up to and during the G20 summit about exactly where the special powers of arrest applied among the public, police and the media. It was only after the summit was over that the government publicly acknowledged that the police were never granted powers of arrest five metres outside of the area designated as a public work under the regulation. Many felt that this suggested the government had deliberately obscured the facts to bluff the protesters from occupying the area surrounding the G20 security zone.

In December 2010, provincial Ombudsman André Marin said that the illegal regulation resulted in a massive breach of civil rights. In April 2011, an independent inquiry led, as I said, by former Chief Justice McMurtry found the act to be beyond troubling and recommended that it be repealed.

Now we’ve heard from the critic for the New Democrats, who gave an hour-long speech over the course of a couple of days—he had about half an hour today. He talked about some of the civil liberties concerns that have been expressed by a number of organizations in the province. I would recommend to the government that they carefully evaluate those concerns. Obviously, the government would tell us and have us believe they have struck the balance between maintaining the appropriate level of security at the same time as, the minister said in his second reading remarks, “we strike the right balance

between protecting Ontario's courthouses, electricity generating plants and nuclear facilities, and respecting the civil rights of the people of this province." So he's saying on one hand that they're ensuring that there's an adequate level of security and that they're balancing that with respect for people's civil rights in a democracy. Certainly, that still is a point of contention, and I would recommend to the government that they carefully evaluate the concerns that are being expressed by some of these organizations before the House concludes its debate on this bill.

I would anticipate and expect that this bill most likely will pass second reading at some point.

1720

Again, I hope that the government doesn't employ time allocation to curtail and shut down the debate, but in all likelihood the bill will continue to be discussed, and at some point there will be a second reading vote. The government has a majority, and we know that if all their members show up, they have the power to pass any piece of legislation that they want, in the final analysis. But at the same time, the bill most likely will go to a standing committee of the Legislature—we would hope that would be the case—and there would be, hopefully, some public hearings to allow for some of the groups and individuals who have concerns about this bill or have ideas to improve and strengthen it. Again, that's part of the legislative process too. It's the way we've always done things in the 24 years that I've been privileged to serve in the Legislature.

We need to hear from the public, and we need to give the people who have an interest in legislation an opportunity to be heard. It doesn't mean that we're always going to be able to satisfy or accommodate every request for changes, but at least people do in a democracy have the right to be heard, and we should, as members of the Legislature, understand that, respect that and allow that to happen so that we ensure we are doing the right thing and taking the time to get it right.

I have, in the past, had the opportunity to raise some concerns about the need for a new courthouse in the region of Halton, and since this bill discusses courthouse security, I think it's important for me to reiterate some of the concerns I have about the existing court facility that we have in Halton, in the Milton community. I can't speak for the other members who are privileged to represent Halton, but certainly the member for Burlington and the member for Halton, as well as the Minister of Labour, who represents the community of Oakville—I have had a number of conversations with them, and I am certainly willing and prepared and happy to work with them to advocate for a new court facility in the Halton region because, quite frankly, we need it.

I had a chance on September 10 to tour the existing court facility, and I think the other area MPPs from Halton had a chance to tour it in the last couple of weeks. We are actually going to have a briefing from the Attorney General's staff, I think next week, to hear from the staff about the process for the approval of new

courthouse facilities, something that I'm looking forward to. I hope that all the other Halton area MPPs are able to attend so that we can sit down with the ministry staff and ensure that we're all talking about the same thing and that we all know and understand the process and that we can work together in the public interest, across party lines, to get this done.

I have had a chance, actually today, to reach out to the Halton County Law Association. Again, this relates to courthouse security in the town of Milton today, in the region of Halton. This is what they told me about the inadequate security that they currently have at their location, which again leads us to advocate for a new courthouse.

They tell me that the existing Milton courthouse is dysfunctional. They say this:

"The floor plan of the Milton courthouse can only be described as a 'labyrinth'. The hallways are cramped, they weave around rooms and the infrastructure, and ingress and egress in an emergency could be compromised.

"Judicial access to some courtrooms is through public hallways and stairwells. In these situations, judges are accompanied from their offices to the courtrooms by an armed police officer.

"Access between the third-floor courtrooms in Milton can only be achieved through the basement, which can lead to some prisoners (some of whom might be deemed to be high-risk) being transported from the cells to the courtrooms through public hallways.

"Significant concerns regarding the housing and movement of persons in custody are the following:

"The holding cells in the Milton courthouse are wholly inadequate and potentially dangerous. There are two "bullpen"-type cells that are used to house all male adult prisoners—one that is used to hold prisoners for bail hearings and one for holding prisoners at court for trials and other appearances. Given the limited space for individual holding cells (which are reserved for women and young persons), the situation often arises where violent offenders are being held together with the general population," obviously a serious concern.

"Transport, housing, and movement of persons in custody are of particular concern, given the layout of the building....

"There is no accommodation, whatsoever, for jurors in Milton. When jury panels are called (a regular occurrence in Milton), potential jurors must sit in stairwells or roam the corridors until they can be sufficiently accommodated in a courtroom. This creates capacity and potential safety issues for all users of the courthouse, especially when high-risk prisoners end up being transported through public hallways and stairwells.

"The elevators in the building are highly unreliable, with frequent breakdowns being the norm."

This is the message I received today from the Halton County Law Association. Again, I would I asked the government to give considerations for our need for a new courthouse in Halton based on the concerns that have been brought to our attention.

I would add, Mr. Speaker, that I had the opportunity to speak to the Attorney General about the need for a new courthouse in Halton since the House resumed sitting this fall. She seemed to be quite interested and I was pleased that she demonstrated genuine interest. In fact, on her own initiative she toured the Milton Courthouse herself a few weeks ago and saw the need for herself. I'm hopeful that we're doing everything we can do to draw the attention of government to the need for a new courthouse. We know that the government is planning to spend \$254 million for justice infrastructure this year and we would anticipate that they're going to spend a similar amount going forward in future years. What we want to know is, where are we on the priority list and what communities might be ahead of us and why? Hopefully we'll be able to establish our need and make our case so that we can be the number one priority.

There was a rumour circulating in recent years that the Milton courthouse was the first priority on the list, but then something happened—quite frankly, that was before I was involved in the issue, so I can't speak to that particularly, except to say that I have heard this from a number of the people who were interested and concerned. At the same time, we need to know where we are now so that we can move forward.

I know this is a very important issue, but the bill does speak to courthouse security. That's one of the main focuses of the bill and that's what the government told us at second reading, so I think we have every reason to talk about our own individual courthouse needs in our ridings. In this case, the existing courthouse happens to be in the riding of Halton, but again, I express my willingness and desire, actually, to work with the other Halton area MPPs to advocate for the government in a constructive and positive way and hopefully get the new courthouse that we need as soon as possible.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time that you've taken to listen to my contribution to the debate on Bill 35. It's an important piece of legislation. I would suggest to the government that they need to listen to the concerns and some of the observations of the opposition over the course of this debate and ensure that the bill goes to committee—hopefully they won't use time allocation to shut down the debate—and then we can ensure that we get this important issue right as we debate it in this Legislature.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the indulgence you've given me, and I look forward to the other members' comments and questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Randy Pettapiece): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to stand up in response to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. He clarified something for me that I had said in the last two-minute portion, that this is the third time this bill has been in front of us. I wasn't so sure, but he clarified that.

The member from Scarborough–Agincourt had pointed out that if it wasn't for us in the third party, this bill would have already been passed, but I think she

forgot the fact that Bill 34 was killed when her government prorogued. Right, Speaker? That's exactly what happened. All the pieces are starting to come together quite clearly now. I just wish that the Liberals would take that advice of having the pieces come together after this many debates and that they would have changed this bill to make it better.

I talked about the concern of people coming into the courthouse being IDed. My next concern is about vehicles being searched by people who attend at the courthouse. Why is it that, if I'm dropped off at the courthouse by, say, my mother or my sister or my neighbour, and I have done something wrong in that courthouse, they would then have the ability to go and search somebody else's vehicle? There's a problem with that. It's not my vehicle; it's just the vehicle that I got there in. Are they going to search the bus, possibly, that I took to the courthouse? Or maybe the taxi that I took to the courthouse? I'm not quite sure how that will exactly work, but there are problems there, and I think they need to be looked at.

1730

The Minister of the Environment had also brought up the fact that this bill needs to get through because the Pan Am Games are coming forward. We know that the government still hasn't even secured the security for the Pan Am Games. So that's a major issue that needs to be talked about also.

That's my time again, Speaker. Thanks for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Randy Pettapiece): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I was very interested, listening to the members from Wellington–Halton Hills and Hamilton Mountain, but as a new member of the Legislature, I value the fact that the people who have already sat in this Legislature for a number of years—24 years, as one member said—you've already debated this repeatedly.

I'm very proud to be sitting on this side of the Legislature with a very responsive government, that we have an 80-year-old piece of legislation that was born out of a very different era when we didn't have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, when we didn't have our own Constitution, when the government of the day thought it was all right to intern Canadians of particular ancestry because of the fear of what they might do during a war. It was a very different era. We have rights now. This government realizes that the legislation that's 80 years old needs to be updated.

When we listen to people like the Honourable Roy McMurtry, who says the police have broad powers to protect our society in all kinds of circumstances, but where they do need some additional powers in court security and at nuclear power plants and electrical generating facilities—so this is very important legislation.

As we saw a few weeks ago on Parliament Hill, it does not take a lot to have a threat become a very serious incident. But when it comes to our courthouses and I daresay to our nuclear power facilities, a very minor threat can have very significant impacts. That's why it's

very important that we move forward with this legislation, pass it and allow the extensive consultation that's already happened to be respected. We've addressed those concerns that have been raised, and we have a good bill before us that we can pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Randy Pettapiece): Questions and comments? The member from—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Randy Pettapiece): —Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: That's great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for filling in for our Speaker, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, who had to come out of his first role and do his other role today. He's always a very accommodating member and represents his riding very, very well. It's always a pleasure to follow him and make comments, today on Bill 35, Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014.

It's been brought up, the bill's history—third time—the charm, maybe; we'll see how it goes. It was, I think, ready to be voted on, but the election was called by the Liberal government—just to back up some of the comments and to help my friends in the third party. But several amendments were made, I think combined from all parties, which has made this a stronger bill.

It was mentioned many times that it was brought up because of the G20, I guess I can call it, fiasco. Anyway, there were some problems after G20. The Honourable Roy McMurtry, who was a minister in the Conservative government a couple of decades ago, led that and made some recommendations to the government to change a very old bill, 75 years old—what is it? There it is: the Public Works Protection Act; right. That's good.

So we've kind of all worked together. We've made some amendments. We're hearing rumours that they're going to do time allocation, though. That doesn't make us on this side of the House very happy, because this is a bill that we could debate some more on. Security, courts, nuclear generating—so, we're hearing rumours that there is time allocation.

I only have seven seconds left, probably for the whole bill, before it comes to time allocation. Mr. Speaker, thank you for that time. I compliment the member from Wellington—Halton Hills on his comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Randy Pettapiece): I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to prove to the PC Party that I was listening to their comments, particularly from the member from Wellington—Halton Hills, my good friend and colleague. But it's nice to hear he got it right—I want to compliment him on that—when he said it was the Liberals who called the election. We want to be very clear on that. It wasn't done by Andrea Horwath and the NDP. So I congratulate our member from Wellington—Halton Hills on raising that.

The second thing that was interesting to me as I spent the entire afternoon here enjoying myself, talking to a

number of motions and bills—there is one interesting one that we debated not that long ago, about an hour ago, I guess it was. It was Bill 24, Prohibiting Driving with Unlawful Handguns Act. Then I listened to the colleague from the Liberal Party very clearly say, you know what? We have to listen to the experts. We have to listen to the police associations. We have to listen to the OPP. We have to listen to everybody on what is in the best interest of the province of Ontario to make sure of public safety.

Yet in this bill, the same thing is happening here. When you take a look at the experts who are saying we shouldn't be doing this, let's see who it is:

—Canadian Civil Liberties Association—a pretty good group;

—The centre for constitutional rights—can you imagine wanting to keep your constitutional rights in the province of Ontario? Makes sense to me;

—Law Union of Ontario—now, think about that; and

—Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, which supports having more protection around handguns.

If I get another opportunity to talk, I'd like to talk about how you're going to have people search me who are untrained private security guards, security officers. I would like to talk about that one if I get a chance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Randy Pettapiece): I return to the member from Wellington—Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to respond to the observations made by the members from Hamilton Mountain, Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and Niagara Falls in their questions and comments.

In particular, I want to respond to the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. He's a government member, and I'm sure he wants to see this bill proceed, and the government would like to see it passed as soon as possible, as well as the other bills before the House. But I would again speak to the importance of ensuring that we get this right.

The government introduced the previous Bill 34, passed it at second reading and sent it to committee. At committee, over the course of the discussion, the public hearings took place and amendments were brought forward. In fact, there were a number of amendments that were brought forward by the opposition that I understand were accepted by the government, which obviously means the government thought they were good ideas.

One added a definition of “‘premises where a restricted access facility is located’ that would include any real property, including buildings and structures on that property that are under direct control of its operator.”

Another amendment: to “change the power of security personnel to ‘request’ that an individual produce identification, information, or submit to a search to the power to ‘require.’ This language is more consistent with the powers of court security personnel under schedule 2.”

Another amendment that came forward by the official opposition that the government accepted: “Remove the requirement for a person to consent to a search of the person, his/her vehicle, or property.”

A fourth one: “Clarify that only vehicles located on the premises could be searched.”

A fifth one: “Add ‘found on’ to the arrest and offences provision to make it an offence to be ‘found on’ prohibited areas in the premises.”

Again, the committee process is important. It allows for public input, and it allows for the members of the Legislature to bring forward ideas to strengthen the bill. In the past, we have done this. We commend the government when they listen to us, and we appreciate it, obviously, because we want to work with the government to improve legislation in this House and ensure that we get it right.

I would again say the committee process is important for Bill 35 and would encourage the government not to employ time allocation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Randy Pettapiece): Further debate? The member from Windsor West.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: No.

Miss Monique Taylor: Oshawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Randy Pettapiece): I’m sorry. Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: That’s okay. It’s the dark hair, right?

I am pleased to have this opportunity to get up and speak to Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014. I didn’t know I was going to have this opportunity today, but as the Liberals apparently are not going to speak to this bill today, I am thrilled to have this opportunity.

1740

I’m always impressed when my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton speaks so eloquently—and elegantly, sometimes—but in this case very specifically and using legal terms. You’ll have to forgive that I don’t come from that background; I’m going to put things more into a layperson’s terms here. I’d also like to thank the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for his thoughts on this bill, as well.

I have some opinions. First of all, I’d like to acknowledge that it is a wonderful opportunity that we have here to work at the Legislature, which we know is a beautiful and historic building. I think we can all appreciate that it is open to the public and that we invite civic engagement as much as possible. We balance the safety of our members and of our staff but also of members of the public who come in, and that really is an important part of our democratic system. As my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton pointed out, that is something that we should really be proud of and keep up on that pillar.

When we think about our courts and our court system, that is a very key part of our democratic system; I would say it’s an anchor. When we are thinking about our rules and our laws, we should be vigilant to ensure that they are consistent and that they are fair, and that they are fairly and equally applied, recognizing that there is, as

we’ve heard from the government, the need to balance safety with personal infringement. We recognize that. I mean, nobody wants to think that people who pose security risks are able to just walk in freely and potentially do damage. We all believe in safety, and we recognize that.

Something that I’ll point out that I have had confirmed—I already thought I understood this: The police do a pretty darn good job at what they do, and they can always investigate as needed if they have the grounds to do so, just to put that out there.

So let’s walk through the bill a little bit. This first section here, schedule 2, says:

“Powers of person providing court security....

“Require a person who is entering or attempting to enter premises where court proceedings are conducted or who is on such premises,

“(i) to identify himself or herself, and

“(ii) to provide information for the purpose of assessing whether the person poses a security risk.”

So it’s saying to identify themselves and provide information, just to figure out whether they pose a risk. It’s not saying that there needs to be a visible risk or that there need to be grounds. It’s just, “We’re asking for information to then assess whether you pose that risk.”

I’m curious as to how this would be applied, because when it says, “require a person ... to identify ... and ... to provide information,” I wonder if that means to require all persons, because if it’s to require all people coming in to identify themselves, first of all that would be quite a cumbersome process. It begs the question of if there would be some kind of sign-in to expedite the process. But if it’s all people, is it going to be children that are in line coming into the courts? Is it going to be, potentially, as my colleague from Hamilton Mountain had said, those who are perhaps wanting anonymity for safety reasons, or who have been victimized in their own journey, and there they are, wanting to engage in the court process and maybe be a casual observer? Is it those individuals? Is it, as I said, individuals who should be protected, or whose identity should be protected rather than publicized? Or is it just the average human being who wants to come in and engage anonymously, as is their right?

If it isn’t all—actually, no, we’ll stick with the “if it’s everybody” thing. Every court has its own security procedure. That may look similar court to court; I don’t know. They might have metal detectors, they might have cameras, they might have video. If everybody is required, or if certain people are required, to identify themselves arbitrarily, is that then going to be recorded and tracked information? It doesn’t say here.

If there is an individual who feels forced to give their identity and it is uncomfortable for them to do so—they’ve perhaps been victimized and they’re now being re-victimized—is that now on video? Is that going to be recorded information? Is there a sign-in and sign-out? Are we going to start doing that? Does that constitute an infringement? I’d say yes.

If it isn’t everybody though, then who is it going to be? Is it going to be subjective? As it says now, “if there

is reason to believe that the person poses a security risk”—what is it going to look like? Is it going to be targeted groups? Is it going to be profiling? Are we going to see racial profiling?

We're already seeing, I would say—I don't know how to word this—disproportionate incarceration of certain marginalized groups. Are we then going to see that—I don't know whether I should say “bias,” but are we going to see that reflected then in who we allow to engage in the process or who we choose to identify coming and going in our court system?

Also, it says here in section 2:

“Search, without warrant,

“(i) a person who is entering or attempting to enter premises ...;” or

“(ii) any vehicle that the person is driving...”

As the member from Hamilton Mountain said, it could be a bus, it could be a taxi, it could be the horse they rode in on. But why? As it is now, the police—

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Not the Trojan Horse they rode in on.

But as it stands now, the police can secure a vehicle, if they feel there is reason to, and then get a warrant, because that's how things work. But in this case, if I don't like the look of you or if someone doesn't like the look of someone and feels the need to identify them, they can also search them. And it doesn't say what that search would entail. So how invasive is that search going to be potentially? And again, back to that, if we're re-victimizing victims with a physical search, what are we talking about? It isn't outlined here. Perhaps we replace the word “search” with “screen.” That seems less invasive.

Also, if someone is a risk in front of whoever is doing the—I'm going to use the word “screen,” as people are coming in and they're letting them in, if they feel that there is reason to get their name or to search them, that would be an immediate, in-their-face situation, not a parking lot risk, so I'm curious about that.

Also, those who would be conducting the searches—I guess in some courts, it would be police and in some courts it could be court security officers. It could potentially be private security. I would say the government is putting itself out there for getting in trouble in terms of who is searching and profiling and whatever.

Okay, next section here:

“Refuse to allow a person to enter premises ...

“(i) if the person refuses to identify himself or herself ...;” or

“(ii) if there is reason to believe that the person poses a security risk...”

So they can refuse based on: “You won't give me your name” or “You haven't provided enough information” or “You're refusing to subject to a search. I'm therefore not going to allow you in.” That doesn't seem fair.

They also have the right, according to this, to “demand that a person immediately leave” those premises if the person refuses to identify themselves—again, coming

back to those privacy issues or where we need to protect people instead of publicizing their identity.

Interestingly, if an individual doesn't want to subject themselves to a search, if someone doesn't want to give their identifying information, their name or otherwise, or their situation, they can be arrested. Again, these are pretty arbitrary, from where I sit, or if they're not, I wonder why they're not more specific as laid out in here.

If this is going to pass, I would suggest that you make things pretty clear because, just as a concerned citizen, I've refused searches at the airport—not the metal detectors, but the things you go in and walk around. I've opted for other alternatives. Does this allow for any kind of alternative—hold on; I'm not sure what I just said there.

1750

Rather than a big room that spins around you, I've gone through the other door, and you can have a pat-down. You have an alternate opportunity for safety and security. Here it says, if you don't give your name or you don't subject to that search, you can't come in, and if you don't like it, it says here that you can be arrested. So if you do not immediately leave the premises, you can be arrested. I don't know what “immediate” means. I know what immediate can feel like, but I don't know what “immediate” technically, legally means. Is that within five minutes? Is that going to give me a chance to let me plead my case, let me tell you why I don't want to tell you who I am and this is why I'd like to be in that courtroom? Maybe there is a communication issue with this individual. So if it's not fast enough, I can be arrested? I have concerns with that.

We've heard about paralegals who have been detained and searched. I mean, the documents that they carry into and out of a courtroom—if I was being represented, I wouldn't want those to be read by just anybody. It does say in here “privilege preserved.” I would just want to make sure and be on the record that that does indeed cover paralegals in terms of the documents that they would potentially be carrying.

I wonder if that's everything—oh, no. In Oshawa, we have a big and beautiful court building, and that's great. It's a stand-alone building. But in many places, the courts are part of a larger building. Where does it say that it's just going to be at the door to the court portion of this building? If someone was entering the government buildings to do other business that is none of anyone else's business, but just over the course of the day popping in, are they then subject to this? Do they have to say who they are? Do they have to say why they're there? Is it the same line in some buildings?

There's really a lot of wiggle room here, and as my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton pointed out, the reason for this bill, with repealing the Public Works Protection Act—that's based on vagueness, and we got ourselves into trouble with vagueness—“we” being not me, but the government got itself into trouble with that. This is a bit of a poison pill. We all want the PWPA, or the Public Works Protection Act, repealed, because it

was brutal, but now here we're opening ourselves up to major issues, and they're civil liberties issues, and I don't think that's something to be taken lightly.

I forgot to mention that I would be sharing my time. So I am pleased to share my time—I think I've got everything—with my esteemed member from—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Esteemed, wow. Niagara Falls.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: —from Niagara Falls, yes. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks very much as well, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to thank you for letting me speak on the bill. During my career, I've been involved in a few protests in my day. I can tell you most of them were peaceful. As a matter of fact, we had a protest here just last week on health care. It's a great freedom in this province to be angry at politicians, which many people have been and continue to be, and to be allowed to protest. I've exercised that right a number of times, and I'm sure a few others in the chamber have, as well, who are here tonight.

Before someone across the floor calls a point of order or asks me to stay on the topic, allow me to explain why this is relevant to the bill we're talking about. The bill takes quite a few angles, some of them good, but some of them not so good. Bill 35 repeals the Public Works Protection Act. It's a nice title; it sounds good, to protect our public works, until of course you realize that this act was one of the pieces of legislation that was responsible for the arrests of peaceful demonstrators during the G20. The Ombudsman of Ontario even pointed out that the misuses of the Public Works Protection Act led to the abuse on the civic liberties of people here in Ontario—as a matter of fact, just a few steps from where we are today.

It looks good to remove the act, although it should have been done earlier. Really, this is an issue here that allows us to see some of the major flaws in the bill. The Public Works Protection Act was supposedly well-meaning, but it was used to arrest a number of peaceful protesters, and nobody in this House can deny that—nobody on this side, and certainly nobody on that side. Ontarians had no idea of the power that was enclosed in that act. It is a perfect example of what happens when we are not clear and concise in our legislation and what can happen when large pieces of legislation are open for interpretation. Did everybody hear that? I know you're all paying attention: open for interpretation. In this case, a reading of that act was used to take away people's rights—rights that are the foundation of this province and, quite frankly, this country. So we need to make sure that the provisions of these bills are necessary by law and

warranted. We need to make sure they can't be construed to take away anybody's rights.

We can do that here today. We can start with the bill at hand.

This bill narrows down the list of public spaces where searches can be conducted, ID can be asked for and questions can be asked with little suspicion necessary. Think about that. So what's left?

We still consider our courthouses public space. Of course, the court deals with law, and sometimes people in bad situations can do desperate things. I don't think anyone believes these institutions shouldn't have some form of security, but this bill allows for some questionable acts. For example, any person walking into a courthouse will be able to be stopped and searched without reason. Maybe they're going to support a friend. Who knows?

In fact, it goes beyond this. If you're around a courthouse, authorities can search your car without a warrant—think about that—or just cause. We're all familiar with just cause. Keep in mind that pretty much any other public building in Ontario does not have this provision.

So this means that if you show up in a court to defend yourself, which is one of the fundamental rights of this province, before you even enter the courthouse, you could have your car searched without any good reason. Before you even walk in the doors of the courtroom, someone is already presuming you are guilty of something.

On one hand, we're repealing the law that caused these unreasonable searches and arrests, which the Ombudsman said was against civic liberties, and yet we continue to enshrine this. We enshrine it around our courthouses, around our large areas of land. It assumes that our laws and our security aren't good enough to handle threats. Instead, it says we should suspend civic liberties around certain areas.

Part of this bill repeals actions caused by the second part of this bill. Let's take a look at Bill 35 again and ask ourselves, are these unreasonable and unwarranted searches actually necessary or are they an attack on our fundamental rights?

I want to finish by saying clearly, when you're talking about searching people, do we want untrained private security officers to be able—to give them the opportunity to search us? It makes absolutely no sense.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands adjourned until Monday morning at 10:30.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
		Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
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Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Sudbury	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
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Soo Wong
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Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
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Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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des comptes publics**

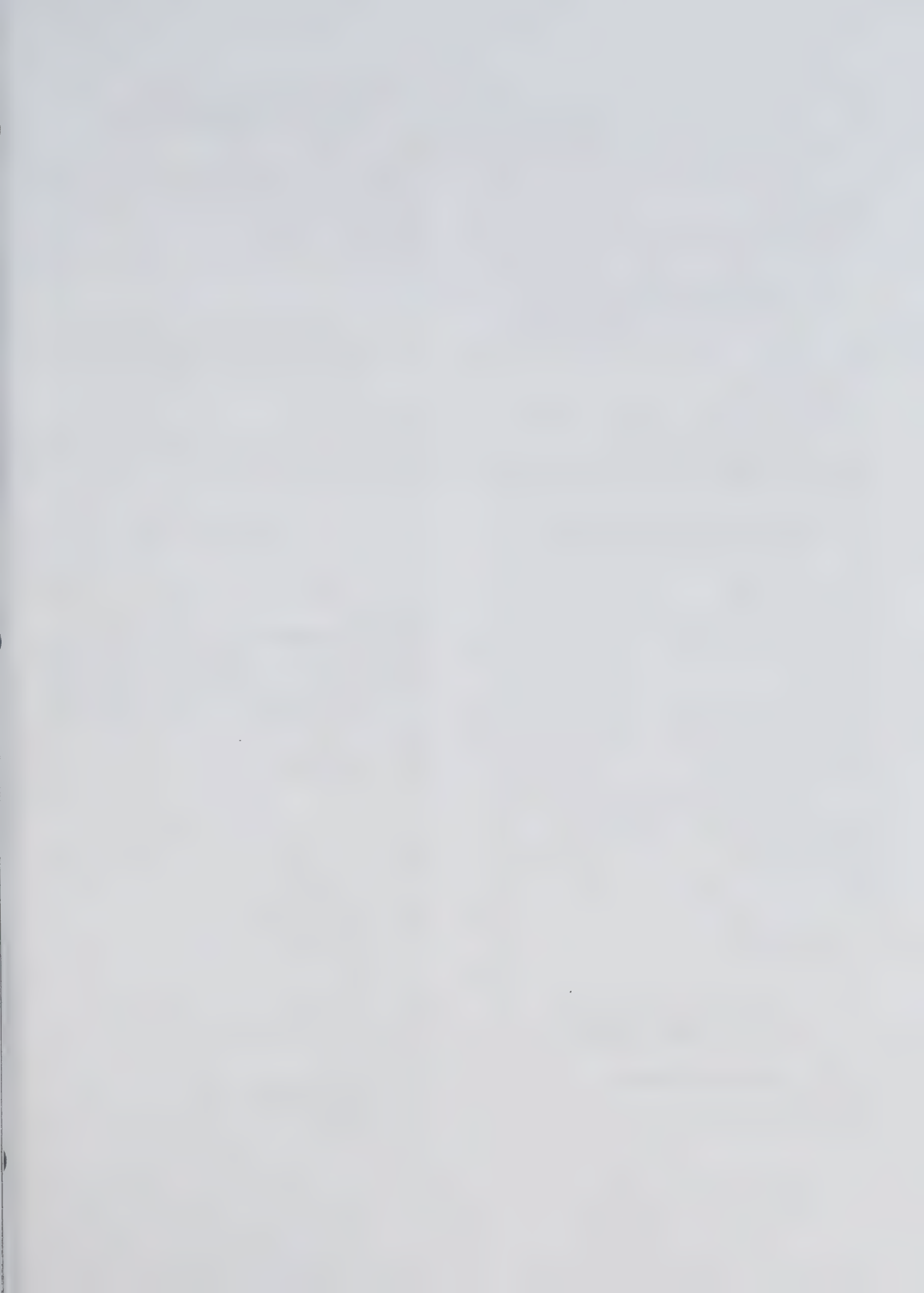
Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
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Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim



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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 1 December 2014

Lundi 1^{er} décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} décembre 2014

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion with respect to a select committee on sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock is seeking to put forth a motion. Do we agree? I heard a no.

Introduction of guests.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce, in the gallery, believe it or not, someone who actually worked for me for 22 years and put up with me: Helen Gerteis, who was in the constituency office.

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, you should give her a standing O.

Helen was in my constituency office for 20 years and has been retired for a number of years. We have lunch every now and then. She still talks to me after all this time.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome members from Epilepsy Ontario, who are here today from across the province for Epilepsy Action Day. A special welcome to the local epilepsy agency that serves my riding: Epilepsy Halton Peel Hamilton. Welcome to Cynthia Milburn, Nicole Palmieri and Harrison Milburn.

I would also like to remind all members that there is a reception in the legislative dining room from 5 to 7 this evening. I hope all members can attend.

Mr. Jim Wilson: The parents of page Nick Sammon, from Simcoe–Grey, are in the members' gallery today: Sherry Banks and Peter Sammon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I would like to welcome Smokey Thomas and Eddy Almeida from OPSEU. They're in the members' gallery today.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to introduce, from Durham region, Dianne McKenzie, executive director of Epilepsy Durham Region; along with Chelsea Kerstens, community outreach associate, also with Epilepsy Durham Region. Welcome and thank you.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to introduce the family of Mikaila Nouhra: her father, Michel; her mother, Micheline; along with her grandmother Sammira Yammine. Mikaila is serving as the page captain today and attends école élémentaire catholique Saint-Michel in Leamington. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome Dr. Nikki Porter, project manager of Epilepsy Ontario; Suzanne McGuire, a director of Epilepsy Niagara; and Susan Harrison, executive director of our wonderful riding of Kingston and the Islands' Epilepsy and Seizure Disorder Resource Centre.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to introduce the family of page captain Haniah Iqbal here this morning: mother, Kubra; father, Asif; sister Nuha; great-aunt Malik; great uncle Amjad; aunt Syeda; uncle Mohammed; and cousin Hafsa.

We also have with us Carruthers Creek Public School teachers Catherine Oikawa and Sandy Taylor. Welcome all.

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to introduce to Queen's Park the Cross-Border Institute at the University of Windsor, led by Dr. Bill Anderson, joined by Sarah Dunphy and Monika Burdzy. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is also my pleasure to introduce Rozalyn Werner-Arcé, executive director; Dr. Suzanne Nurse; and Mrs. Suzanne Moffatt, all from Epilepsy Ontario. They came and visited me this morning.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm not sure they're here yet, but Jeff and Angela Hurst from Cobourg are joining me for lunch today and a tour of Queen's Park. Welcome.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I don't have an introduction, Mr. Speaker, but I have a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of World AIDS Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health is seeking unanimous consent to wear ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

The Attorney General on a point of order.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, je me lève pour demander un consentement unanime pour que tous les partis puissent faire une courte déclaration.

ation sur la nomination de M^{me} Michaëlle Jean comme nouvelle Secrétaire générale de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to seek unanimous consent for all parties to make a brief statement on the appointment of Michaëlle Jean as the new Secretary General of the International Organisation of La Francophonie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General is seeking unanimous consent for all three parties to make a statement on the appointment of Michaëlle Jean. Do we agree? I heard a no.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: A point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of Epilepsy Action Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is seeking unanimous consent to wear ribbons for Epilepsy Action Day. Do we agree? Agreed.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today in the Speaker's gallery, we have a delegation from the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Hubei Province of the People's Republic of China. Please welcome our guests from China.

1040

WEARING OF HAT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—and don't tell me.

Go ahead.

Mr. Paul Miller: I request unanimous consent, out of respect for my team that came so close yesterday, to wear the Tiger-Cat hat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is seeking to wear his hat as a result of their participation in the Grey Cup. Do we agree? Agreed.

Put it on.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Your government spent over \$250 million of taxpayers' money on the Social Assistance Management System, or SAMS. The system was supposed to improve the de-

livery of social assistance for recipients of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

The Minister of Community and Social Services in fact said during a November 4, 2014, meeting of the estimates committee that she felt "fairly confident that the new system will have a pretty seamless rollout...."

Premier, we don't need another eHealth. Will your government recall the estimates committee so we can hear directly from witnesses and front-line workers to get to the bottom and help you get out of another Liberal scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I just want to step back and say that the reason this new system is being implemented is that there was an outdated computer system in place. This new system is designed ultimately to allow for better service to clients, to make sure that front-line workers will be able to spend more time with clients, that clients will have 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week access to online information and more information about their cases.

The reality is that there was a glitch. I understand that. There are 500,000 cheques that go out every month. There was a problem with a portion of those. My understanding is that less than 1% now, a little over 100 cheques, still need to be dealt with, but that 99% of the error has been corrected.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we get going, I'm going to ask for a stop to the injections into this conversation.

Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: Your government continues to demonstrate an inability to manage Ontarians' best interests. Your minister signed off on this expensive new system, a \$250-million system that was flawed from the beginning, and you were forewarned. A letter written by OPSEU President Warren "Smokey" Thomas in July to your minister responsible stated, "Unless improvements are made to SAMS, the launch in late fall will be rife with problems, delays and poor service."

Premier, Ontario's most vulnerable rely on these payments. I don't believe you, and I don't think anyone believes, that 99% of the problem is fixed at this point. What is your government going to do to make sure these people aren't left behind, that they have their money for Christmas?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would welcome Smokey Thomas to the Legislature today. He's here, and I'm sure that he shares with me a desire to make sure that clients of the system get the very best service possible.

The system that was in place was outdated. There was an overpayment error. It was caught immediately. Within 24 hours, about 99% of the payments were stopped or they were retracted immediately. There's about 1%, a little over 100 situations, that still need to be dealt with.

I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition is not saying there should never be change. I'm sure he's not saying that we should never update a system and make sure that

caseworkers would have more time with clients—because that is what we are doing. We are in the business of improving service to the people of Ontario, making sure that people get better service. Along the way, when there is a situation like this, we act quickly to rectify. That is what has happened in this situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, you only acted after the fact. Mr. Thomas, the president of OPSEU, warned you back in July. He told you that his members were telling him there would be major problems with the rollout. He was exactly right. Why didn't you heed his warnings? Why did you buy an expensive program that doesn't appear to work from the get-go, and why are you moving forward defending this when it's just going to turn out to be another Liberal scandal? How much is this Liberal scandal going to cost us?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to set the record straight on the error that occurred last week. I think it's worth knowing that SAMS is a technology that uses the Cúram case management software—the same platform that it used in many jurisdictions globally—now owned by IBM. We have a contract with them to assist us through the transition of going live with SAMS.

As the Premier has stated, clearly this is a new system that is replacing a totally outdated computer system. It will bring our services into the 21st century. We have spent the last many months training the users on SAMS, some 11,000 users both in municipal OW offices as well as ODSP offices—extremely extensive training.

We thank the workers for all their hard work, but clearly the opposition is trying to make a mountain out of a very small molehill.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr. Jim Wilson: This is also for the Premier. Last week, your health minister bowed to public outrage and provided the Erie St. Clair Community Care Access Centre with an additional \$4.1 million toward their deficit.

There are 14 CCACs in Ontario. Throughout the province, CCACs are being forced to claw back health care services because of budgetary pressures.

Earlier this year, my colleague the member for Dufferin—Caledon brought to your attention the fact that the Central West CCAC would have to cut the number of new patients it could accept. That is despite the fact that since 2010 the amount of patients needing that CCAC's services has nearly doubled.

Premier, is your health minister going to provide new funding for all CCACs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to speak to this in the supplementary, but the fact is, we are investing more

than \$4.3 billion in the community sector, Mr. Speaker. We've increased that funding by \$270 million this year, in 2014-15. So we continue to invest more in the community sector.

As I have said many times in this House, we are in a transition. There is no doubt about that. We are changing the way we deliver health services in Ontario. People want care in their homes; they want care in the community. We are moving to a system that provides much more of that care in the community, Mr. Speaker. But we have to continue to work with the CCACs, work with the community agencies, to make sure that people get the care that they need when they need it. To that end, we continue to invest and increase funding to that sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: The Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE, says there has been a 33% spike in the demand for home care. We can expect this trend to continue as our population ages.

CUPE says the South West Community Care Access Centre—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: And the NDP obviously think this is funny—which services patients in a large geographical area from London to Grey-Bruce, is resorting to cutting care for some ill patients and denying care to others altogether.

Premier, do you believe the \$250 million you squandered on the failed SAMS computer system could have been better used to help people who need care through our CCACs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question.

Mr. Speaker, we're investing more than \$4 billion this year in home and community care across the province. That's an increase of more than \$250 million from last year.

I want to talk about what we're particularly proud of. We have got a team that's being led right now by Gail Donner. Those in the home and community sector see this woman for the experience that she has got and the leadership that she is providing to help us look at our home and community sector as we continue to transform as a province and transform our health care system.

We have been focusing, as everyone in this Legislature knows, over the past several years on our acute-care facilities. Now we're beginning to turn our attention in a very substantive way to home and community care.

We know there are improvements that need to be made. We know that we need to make sure that we are providing the highest quality of care to people where they need it as close to home as possible. We're working on that, and, with Gail Donner's leadership, I expect to report back in January. I'm sure that we're going to have solid recommendations to help guide us into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier. Premier: our CCACs have their backs against the wall. The reason

they are not receiving adequate funding is because the government has dug a deep fiscal hole. Over a decade of Liberal mismanagement means we're spending millions on servicing debt interest payments and waste. That money should be invested towards safeguarding front-line health care and providing for patients in need.

1050

Premier, your health minister even vowed to "personally address any issues with specific clients who say they are not getting the care they need." Well, we're hearing dozens of stories by the day, hundreds by the week. So, Premier, have you asked your minister to directly report to you about these individual cases and, if so, how many house calls has the good doctor made?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd be happy to make a few house calls if that is going to lead us down the important path of continuing to improve our health care system. But the same thing I did privately last week with the NDP I want to do publicly, not just with the Conservatives but with the NDP: to actually implore them, if they have specific examples—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex, come to order. The member from Dufferin—Caledon, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex, second time.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —in fact, with my colleagues on this side of the Legislature as well; it's an important part of my job. It's a responsibility that I take very, very seriously as the Minister of Health and as a health care professional.

I would ask them, if they are aware, through their constituency offices or elsewhere, of specific individuals whose health is being compromised because of what they perceive is a real or actual change in the support they're providing at home and in the community, to bring those specific cases to my attention, and I commit to working with them to resolve them.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Nearly a million people rely on social assistance to put food on the table and a roof over their heads, but the Liberals' new software program is causing chaos for clients and staff. How could the Premier sign off on a quarter-billion dollar lemon, frankly, having been warned in advance that it could turn into a nightmare for our province's most vulnerable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will answer this question again. The fact is, there was an outdated system in place that needed to be upgraded. We needed to improve the service to the people of the province who rely on social assistance. We needed to have in place a system that was going to allow front-line workers, caseworkers, to have

more time with their clients. That's what this system is about.

Five hundred thousand cheques go out every month. There was an error earlier in the month, earlier this week. It was immediately caught. Within 24 hours, 99% of the payments were stopped or retracted. Ministry officials are working to make sure the final 1% of cases get dealt with.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Folks on social assistance trust the government to get things right, but the Liberals rolled out a program full of bugs, causing a \$20-million glitch. Payments are being lost, cheques are being delayed, people are suffering and staff are at their wits' end. Can the Premier tell me how many Ontarians faced empty cupboards this past weekend and what the government did to help them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The first question I asked of my staff this morning was whether people who were relying on these cheques did get their money. My understanding is that they did, and that there are still about a hundred or so cheques that need to be rectified; not that people didn't get cheques, but that the amounts need to be clarified.

To the best of my ability, I asked this question, and to my understanding, people did get their money and there were about 1% of situations where there still needs to be some change. But the fact is that the ministry acted immediately and 99% of the cases were dealt with. All of that speaks to how important it is, obviously, that we be vigilant, but it does not suggest there should never be change. It does not suggest that we shouldn't update systems. It does not suggest that we shouldn't put in place a system that allows caseworkers to spend more time with their clients.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals' quarter-billion dollar app is full of bugs, and it's causing havoc for people on social assistance. The most vulnerable people deserve better than trial and error. They deserve a social assistance program that actually works for them. How can the Premier allow the most vulnerable Ontarians to pay for the Liberals' mistakes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Those are broad, sweeping generalizations that bear little or no resemblance to what is actually going on.

The ministry trained 11,000 users to make sure that they knew what was required with the new system. In addition to that, because there was this error, there are now staff being deployed to go to offices to make sure those final problems get worked out.

The fact is, we made a change. Yes, I am very, very clear that it was necessary to make a change, to put a better system in place. When there was an error, there was an immediate reaction, and there continues to be a reaction that gives support to those front-line workers to make sure people have the money that they need. That was my concern this morning: to make sure that people

who were counting on those cheques got them, and that has happened.

CHILD ADVOCATE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Will the Premier tell the parents of children in youth detention centres, mental health facilities and schools for the severely disabled—some of the most vulnerable kids in Ontario—why she's preventing the child advocate from protecting the rights of their children?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, what I would say to the leader of the third party and to all those people who are paying very close attention to advocacy and accountability in this province is that we are expanding the authority of the child advocate. We are increasing the powers. In fact, the measures that are contained in Bill 8 were ones that the child advocate was very positive about when we first brought them in.

My understanding is that the current requests are things that go beyond the mandate of the child advocate. But we've expanded the authority of the child advocate; we have done that in the bill. As that bill works through the Legislature, the child advocate will have more authority, not less authority. That is as it should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier seems more interested in talking about accountability than she does about doing anything about it. Experts call Bill 8 troubling—

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Experts, Speaker, are calling Bill 8 troubling. They say it falls seriously short. Experts like the child advocate, Patients Canada and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies have some serious concerns about the gaps that currently exist in Bill 8. Why isn't the Premier interested in what the experts have to say on transparency and accountability?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Children and Youth Services is going to want to comment on the final supplementary. But we have worked with many experts, including the experts that the leader of the third party is talking about. We actively consulted with the child advocate as we drafted Bill 8. We appreciate the feedback that we got from him and his office. We have accepted amendments that the advocate brought forward. We've accepted amendments to the bill that we consulted with him about.

The fact is, Bill 8 expands the powers of the child advocate, Mr. Speaker. The NDP, I understand, plans to vote against our legislation, but the fact is that we are expanding the authority of the child advocate. We are increasing his powers. We are creating advocacy and accountability in the health care system that didn't exist before. So I hope the third party would be able to work with us on this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the Liberals' so-called transparency bill seems to be more about slapping a nice name on a Stephen Harper-type omnibus bill than it is about increasing transparency in our province. When something as basic as addressing aboriginal children and youth—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Mr. Mike Colle: She should withdraw that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence might himself be withdrawn.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When something as basic as addressing aboriginal children and youth being cared for by children's aid societies is left out, people wonder what the heck is going on.

Why is the Premier shutting out the advice of people like the child advocate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We are definitely not shutting out the advice of the provincial advocate. We have met with the advocate numerous times. The reason we're recommending expansion of his investigatory powers to children's aid societies is because it's a natural fit. Children don't have a natural voice. We thought it was a perfect fit for the advocate to oversee children's aid societies. We know there has been a general call for that.

1100

I also want to assure the member of the third party and everybody in this House that for every other ministry program under the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ombudsman has investigatory power. I mentioned last week in the House that he does have powers to investigate things like youth justice facilities. We are extending the powers to the children's aid societies. We feel the advocate is well-positioned for that, given his background, and that he'll do a great job in the interest of children and youth.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Education. Bill 10 will likely pass this week, after limited and sparse public debate and public consultation. Given the minister's personal commitment to Bill 10 and her desire, can she provide a detailed assessment of how many child care spaces will be impacted by her plan? In other words, can she tell us how many fewer child care spaces there will be in Ontario as a result of her bill?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, the good news in child care is that if you look at the number of spaces that have been created over the last several years, not only have we created 130,000 since 2003—if you look at each of the last several years, we've created, on average, 18,000 a year. We have no reason to think that is going to change; that we'll see any slowdown in the creation of high-quality spaces for our children. We would anticipate that

we'll in fact see over 70,000 new spaces created in the next several years.

In particular, if the licensed home child care operators take advantage of the opportunities, we could see 6,000 more spaces just in private home child care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: [*Inaudible*] and not acknowledge that's the impending crisis. In addition, this was the same minister who told me, over a year and a half ago, that reopening contracts didn't cost \$500 million, yet the auditor last week did tell us just that.

The ministry knows that the range of lost child care spaces will be 140,000, as a result of what the Coalition of Independent Childcare Providers suggested, and up to 180,000 if we follow the Ombudsman's numbers.

Bill 10 is not about safety. We should be talking about hiring more inspectors, if that is the case, or ensuring we have stronger enforcement and regulations, or creating an independent registry. But we're not. Instead, we're talking about eliminating spaces, changing pedagogy of Montessori and private religious schools, and eliminating parental choice.

I ask the minister, finally and once and for all, in the name of transparency: Will she tell this assembly how many child care spaces her government is going to eliminate?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm glad that the member mentioned some of those safety factors, Speaker, because I'd like to tell you what the Tories propose to do to Bill 10 with their amendments. For example, they were going to limit the scope of child care to children under 10 years of age, which would have the effect of removing subsidies from a number of very needy children. That was what they were going to do.

They were, despite the evidence from Yellowwood, actually going to increase the number of children who are allowed in private home child care centres above and beyond what we put in Bill 10, despite all the problems we've had. They were going to remove the new administrative penalties from the bill—that's what actually allows us to go in and find people—and they were going to limit the protection orders where you get to actually close places down. They were going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Finance. This government claims to be a government based on transparency and accountability. I hope we'll see that in the answer to the question.

According to the fall economic statement in early November of this year, the first annual Automobile Insurance Transparency and Accountability Expert Report was delivered to the Minister of Finance. The whole point of this report was to let the public know why premiums are staying so high despite the fact that we had draconian benefit cutbacks in 2010 and subsequent years that re-

duced the costs for insurance companies. Despite promising over a week ago to make this report public "momentarily," the government has refused to release it.

What's in this report that the government does not want the eight million drivers of Ontario to know about?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Yes, last year, our government took leadership in launching the Auto Insurance Cost and Rate Reduction Strategy, something that I thought that member opposite would have been supportive of, given that it would have initiated the ability for us to reduce the cost of claims, enabling us to reduce the cost of premiums—and we are doing so, obviously, now without their support. We did commission a report, a report that would have been available to us much sooner, of course, had we not had an unwanted election, again, prompted by that party.

We will continue to do our work. We'll have the report out in due course. We're reviewing it now, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance said, weeks ago, that this report would be out momentarily. Where is the report?

The fact is, you said you would release this report momentarily and you haven't.

New Democrats have long argued that the insurance companies already pocketed billions of dollars of savings but none of those savings have been passed on to drivers. That's why we called for a 15% premium cutback. We are the ones who championed this cause for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Mike Colle: But you voted against the bill, though.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: We voted against a bill that stripped the right to sue from the people of Ontario, that stripped the right for people to stand up to insurance companies, and we proudly did so—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence come to order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Our question, very directly, to the Minister of Finance: Why won't you release this transparency report? Why are you delaying? What's in this report that you don't want people to know about?

Hon. Charles Sousa: What the people should know, Mr. Speaker, is the history that's gone to get to where we are now and the constant obstacles that we had to deal with, primarily from the third party in many circumstances.

In 2003, we introduced the Auto Insurance Rate Stabilization Act. In 2005, we introduced a regulation to prohibit auto insurance from using certain information, such as credit scoring. In 2008, we completed our first five-year review of the auto insurance system. In 2010, we provided new reforms for increased consumer choices to stabilize rates. In 2011, we created the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force. In 2012, we strengthened FSCO's authority to deal with unfair practices. In 2013,

we made a commitment to reduce auto insurance rates by 15%.

We introduced legislation this week so that we can get this under way, and it was voted against by that member, by that party, Mr. Speaker.

Our report is in hand—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

New question.

SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRALE
DE LA FRANCOPHONIE
SECRETARY GENERAL OF LA
FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} Eleanor McMahon: Ma question s'adresse à la première ministre en sa qualité de ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales. L'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, connue de façon informelle comme la Francophonie, est une organisation composée de 57 États et gouvernements membres, trois membres associés et 20 observateurs.

The modern organization of the Francophonie was created in 1970. Starting as a small group of northern French-speaking countries, the Francophonie has since evolved into a global organization whose numerous branches co-operate with its member states in the fields of culture, science, economy, justice and peace.

Speaker, as a Canadian, I am proud of our rich French heritage and our participation with la Francophonie.

Premier, yesterday Canadians heard the news that former Governor General Michaëlle Jean has been chosen as Secretary General of la Francophonie, the first woman and the first Canadian to lead this vital organization.

Madame la Première Ministre, quelle est votre réaction à cette nouvelle historique et qu'est-ce que cela signifie par rapport à notre riche héritage francophone?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Je tiens à offrir mes sincères félicitations à M^{me} Michaëlle Jean.

She has been chosen by consensus as the new Secretary General of the Organisation internationale de Francophonie. As the first woman and the first Canadian to hold this position, Madame Jean is breaking down barriers.

Notre communauté francophone fait partie intégrale de notre histoire comme Ontariens et Canadiens, dans notre passé comme dans notre futur. La nomination de M^{me} Jean à ce poste reflète cela. C'est un moment de fierté pour nous, Canadiens. Nous pouvons facilement soutenir solidement ce que prône M^{me} Jean, une Francophonie internationale qui sait prendre sa juste place, l'élargissement du rôle des femmes et des jeunes dans le développement économique et un rapprochement entre le Sud et le Nord. Félicitations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} Eleanor McMahon: Merci, madame la Première Ministre. C'est en effet une excellente nouvelle pour le pays tout entier, qui se réjouit ce matin. La Francophonie

est bien plus qu'un rassemblement de forces culturelles, mais c'est aussi un atout économique, politique et social.

Monsieur le Président, est-ce que la première ministre, dans son rôle de ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, peut nous éclairer sur la place de l'Ontario dans la Francophonie internationale?

1110

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: La ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Vaste est le monde francophone. En effet, dans l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, ses 80 États, gouvernements et 890 millions de personnes, l'Ontario a su se tailler une place de choix et nous avons participé aux six derniers sommets de l'OIF.

Je fais écho des paroles de la première ministre et c'est avec une profonde fierté que je félicite ma commettante d'Ottawa—Vanier, M^{me} Michaëlle Jean. Elle a su faire tomber les barrières, déjouer les stéréotypes et défier les conventions. C'est tout à l'honneur de M^{me} Jean, qui s'est présentée malgré les défis présents. C'est aussi à l'honneur des États membres, qui n'ont pas eu peur de changer les conventions et qui ont vu en elle une force rassembleuse, moderne et audacieuse.

Le résultat? Le poste de Secrétaire générale de la Francophonie mondiale est pour la première fois comblé par une femme et par une personnalité canadienne. Merci.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, your sheer incompetence running a government portfolio is having deep consequences for the people of Ontario. You've wasted over \$400 million on a building that was supposed to be dedicated to medical research. Instead, you've invested that money into a comfy glass palace for your bureaucrats rather than front-line services. Simply put, that money could have been invested in just about anything else and it would have been money better spent.

Minister, do you not agree that the money you've blown on MaRS should have been invested into improving our essential services?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development—

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —Employment and Infrastructure. I've got to get it all out.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We struggle with this every time, don't we, the long name? Premier, we might have to shorten it eventually.

Insults aside, I think it's very clear that what the member talks about is a loan, not a grant—a loan that is fully secured on a property that's worth more than what has been dedicated by the province. We put forward over 700 documents that verify and confirm that. Now what we're looking for is advice from Michael Nobrega and Carol Stephenson on what's the best path forward on a project

that had some challenges during the recession. We're looking forward to that advice.

I'm not sure why the member continues to try to use question period just to hurl insults at us. He should take a look at what we've done and what we're trying to do to ensure that this project moves forward in a positive way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, I've heard your excuses for many months now, and nobody believes you, especially your fairy-tale happy ending, and especially not a constituent of mine, Jim Buchanan.

Jim Buchanan was told that even though he desperately needs a knee replacement, there is no money left at the hospital. The quota for knee replacements has been reached. Let me repeat that again: While a constituent of mine is told there is no money for needed surgery, you and your government have blown millions on a glass palace for your bureaucrats. This, sadly, isn't a surprise anymore, just a disturbing reality and trend of your government's terrible mismanagement.

Minister, do you not agree that the \$400 million you've blown on MaRS should have been better spent providing essential access to surgeries like knee replacements for Jim Buchanan and many, many others?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We all feel a very strong amount of support for the Minister of Health's work that he's doing to ensure that we continue to invest more and more in health care. I think the minister would tell you, if I referred the question to him, that wait times are down for knee replacements across this province as a result of the efforts we've made.

For the member to compare a totally repayable secured loan with somehow money that has been spent either indicates that the member doesn't understand this issue after all the time we've spent on it or that he's trying to make his constituent think something that's simply incorrect.

The fact is that what we've invested in phase 2 with MaRS is a loan that's fully repayable and fully secured. We will move forward on a positive basis on this issue. The member ought to start working constructively with us on this instead of inaccurate things like—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Quand quelqu'un a une urgence médicale, la capacité de communiquer peut être une question de vie ou de mort. Les résidents des régions désignées ont le droit, selon la Loi sur les services en français, de communiquer en français avec le gouvernement et ses agences.

Mais récemment, une femme francophone de Dubreuilville n'a pas pu accéder au service 911 en français. Elle a dû abandonner, appeler sa fille, qui sait

parler anglais, et lui demander de faire son appel à sa place. Un temps précieux a été perdu.

Malheureusement, cette dame n'est pas la seule francophone pour qui le 911 a échoué. Comment est-ce que le ministre peut expliquer qu'en 2014 le système 911 ne peut pas répondre à un appel en français?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It's important, when we talk about French-language services in the province—it's imperative—that all of us, particularly we, on the government side, do everything we can in a responsible way to provide those services.

I'm not sure if the reference was specifically to 911. I know that the member opposite has already made me and the Attorney General aware of some legitimate concerns concerning translation services and the ability for a citizen of this province to converse—particularly, as you can imagine, in a 911 situation—in the language of their choice. We are working on solving that particular issue, and I've talked with the member opposite about other issues where we need to continue to strengthen and make sure that we meet our responsibility.

It's a responsibility that I take very seriously: that we provide French-language services throughout the health care system for the people who need during those times.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Il y a quelques années, aussitôt que le gouvernement envoyait un service en sous-traitance, ce service était exempté de la Loi sur les services en français. Après les recommandations répétées du commissaire aux services en français, le gouvernement a dit qu'il avait fermé cette échappatoire et que depuis le mois de juillet 2014, les fournisseurs de services de santé pour le gouvernement de l'Ontario sont assujettis à la Loi sur les services en français.

Mais il semble que cette échappatoire demeure. Le gouvernement a dit au commissaire que si les RLIS engagent un fournisseur de services de santé, ils n'ont pas besoin de se conformer à la loi. Dans son rapport annuel, le commissaire a qualifié cette situation de menace sérieuse, et il a tout à fait raison.

Pourquoi est-ce que le ministre demande si peu d'engagement envers les services de santé en français, permettant que ces lacunes dangereuses exemptent des centaines de fournisseurs de santé de la Loi sur les services en français?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Attorney General.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister responsible for francophone affairs.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Oui, la membre de Nickel Belt a une très bonne question. Maintenant, oui, les services qui sont offerts par le gouvernement de l'Ontario et qui sont contractés avec un autre organisme—ils doivent offrir les services en français. C'était une lacune qui existait et on a changé, on a amélioré, on a modifié, et maintenant les organismes, comme les municipalités, auxquels la loi ne s'applique pas, s'ils offrent des services au nom du gouvernement de l'Ontario, doivent les offrir en français.

Maintenant les contrats qui avaient déjà été signés—on avait donné une certaine période pour pouvoir s'ajuster et s'adapter à ces nouvelles recommandations-là.

Vous avez tout à fait raison, et je veux féliciter le ministre de la Santé, qui a vraiment réagi très, très bien lorsqu'on a apporté ce problème du—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci. New question.

ELDERLY PERSONS CENTRES

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors affairs.

Minister, seniors are our lifeline to the past and our future. They play an active and important role in our province's communities and economy. Ontario is home to approximately two million people over the age of 65.

In my own riding of Halton, seniors are a thriving, active and incredibly engaged group in our community.

However, as we all know, there are challenges that our seniors face as they grow old.

I recently joined the minister for an important funding announcement for province-wide elderly persons centres, including one in my own riding. These centres promote the safety, well-being and health of seniors in Ontario.

Can the minister please tell us about EPCs and why they are an important investment for our seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank the member from Halton for a very thoughtful question. Investing in elderly persons centres is only one of the many ways of helping our seniors stay active, engaged and connected in their own community. Indeed I'm very, very pleased to inform you, and inform the Legislature, that Ontario is investing over \$11.5 million supporting 265 elderly persons centres located throughout our province.

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This is what I call investment at work for our seniors—investment to improve the quality of life of our seniors to live a healthy and more meaningful and fulfilling life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I would like to thank the minister for his response.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had the pleasure of attending a coffee house social at the local Milton seniors' centre, which is receiving over \$54,000 this year. This centre is incredibly important to the well-being of seniors in Halton. Each time I visit, I am delighted to see first-hand the difference elderly persons centres' funding is making in my community. The Milton seniors' centre has something for everyone. There are fitness classes, computer classes, arts and crafts and so much more.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on how funding for EPC is a key component of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Again, I want to thank the member from Halton for the question. EPC is indeed only one of the major components of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. Out of the 265 elderly persons centres, more

than 60% are run by non-profit organizations and some 40% are run by local municipalities.

I visited the centre in Milton, and I have to say that they are getting \$54,000 to assist them with their programs. If you really want to see how our investment for seniors is working, you have to visit this particular centre in Milton, which is called the coffee house social—seniors enthusiastically bursting with activities, fitness classes for every level of mobility, one-on-one computer classes, arts, crafts, knitting, dancing and music. This is what I call, Speaker—this it is what it's all about—caring and investing for our seniors.

I thank you, Speaker. There is more to come.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Walker: Earlier today my leader, the member for Simcoe-Grey, shared with this House that a quarter of a billion dollars and four years was spent with a new system that's supposed to support those most needy in our society.

We also learned that this system is wrought with bugs and exploitable weaknesses.

We also learned that the minister knew about the computer problems all along but ignored—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. I did not get who the question was to.

Mr. Bill Walker: To the Minister of Community and Social Services, Speaker. Thank you.

We also learned that the minister knew about the computer problems all along but ignored staff's warning, who summed up the computer situation in one simple word: chaos.

In fact, not only were they ignored, but in estimates on November 4, the minister said, "I feel fairly confident that the new system will have a pretty seamless rollout next week." "Fairly confident" and "pretty seamless" don't seem to equate to the reality of today, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, it's your word against the front line. Who is telling the truth?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for allowing me the opportunity to reiterate what the Premier said so very clearly earlier in question period. This new computer system is state-of-the-art. It is a very large and involved system, clearly. It has taken many, many months of training of many staff to get into good working order.

I want to assure the member opposite that the concerns that were raised earlier in the summer by the presidents of CUPE and OPSEU were taken extremely seriously by officials in my ministry, and that's why we accelerated some of the training that was provided. Again, some 11,000 users were trained in some 257 offices. There is no chaos whatsoever.

Individuals received their cheques last week, and the final number will be getting them today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again, to the Minister of Community and Social Services: Well, Minister, state-of-the-art—I think SAMS should sadly be another money scandal coming at us. The minister responsible for eHealth too was working out glitches until the billion-dollar scandal surfaced.

The fact is, your government has a track record of asleep-at-the-switch oversight. In the case of this specific oversight, mistaken payments were sent to 6,000 social service recipients to a tune of at least \$300,000.

Minister, we want to restrike the Standing Committee on Estimates so we can call witnesses and get to the bottom of this. We hope you'll actually adhere to this this time so we can ensure that this does not turn into another eHealth boondoggle.

Will you support the striking of the Standing Committee on Estimates so we can get to the truth?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Again, to set the record straight, the new system processed both the Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program monthly payments to some 570,000 individuals totally successfully. As the Premier stated earlier, there were a small number of overpayments. Those on direct deposit—some 85% of individuals receive their payments through direct deposit—were changed, and the correct amount deposited within 24 hours. The few remaining, who do receive paper cheques, are being issued new cheques today. We are down to contacting some 119 people as of 10:30 this morning.

We have coped with this very small glitch in an extremely effective way. In fact, I would like to thank all the front-line workers who were so diligent.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. In Sudbury, there are 30-tonne mining trucks that are constantly driving along Lasalle Boulevard, a main shopping street, because it's the only way that the trucks can travel between the mine site and the smelter. Sudbury officials want to extend Maley Drive so that the slurry trucks don't have to mix with shoppers and residents.

The people of Sudbury have set aside millions of dollars for this top-priority project. The government has repeatedly promised to fund the project—it was right there in their budget—but so far not a single dollar has flowed. Once again, we have a promise but no action. When will the provincial government actually keep its promise to the people of Sudbury and fund the project?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The leader of the third party would be aware that before the election we brought forward a budget that committed to moving forward on this project. She didn't support that; she made us go through an election. So we brought forward the budget again where she had a second chance to support this project, and she failed to do that—because in the second budget

we brought forward, this project was clearly identified as a government priority, as we recognized it was a priority for the community of Sudbury.

Now you're getting up to tell us that you support the project. Thank you for your support, but we've got it in hand. It's a commitment we made in the budget. It's a commitment we will fulfill, and we're looking forward to moving on it as soon as we can.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, all that talk, and still no action. Where's the money? That's the question.

The people of Sudbury have been waiting over 10 years for Maley Drive to be extended. They've waited long enough, Speaker. They have set aside—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, come to order. Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, come to order.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Sudbury have set aside their share of the project money. It's time for the government to pay its share. Will this government stop playing games, stop talking a good game, and actually ante up the funding for the extension of Maley Drive in Sudbury?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I guess I want to know, which budget do you want me to refer to: the one that you rejected and sent us to an election on, or the one that we passed with our majority here in this House, which you opposed? Both of them refer to Maley Drive as a commitment of \$26.7 million for the first phase of expansion. We're committed to the project. We will be moving on the project. I'm looking forward very soon to moving on it.

We are in discussions with the federal government with regard to federal funding. It could be part of that; it may not be. It all depends. We've just received information—after asking since March—from the federal government with regard to the details of the federal program. We expect to be able to move forward soon, Mr. Speaker, but we don't have a date as of yet.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Often in this House, we speak about transit in the GTHA. I know there are many investments being made here, whether it's the Eglinton Crosstown, UP Express or GO Transit. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that there are those who say our government is only investing in Toronto transit, stating that those types of key investments aren't being made in other parts of the province.

1130

In my community of Ottawa South, people care very much about their transit and transportation. They rely on OC Transpo to get to work, school and doctors' appointments—all those things people do in their daily lives.

My community wants to know that our government is committed to investing in transit all across the province, including Ottawa South. Can the minister please tell members of this House what the government is doing to invest in transit and transportation in other parts of Ontario?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the outstanding member from Ottawa South for that question but also for his advocacy on behalf of his community.

I appreciate the question because, of course, I've heard some of the same concerns. I know that Ontarians want to know that our government is investing right across the province, not just in the GTHA.

Speaker, as you know, we have a bold \$29-billion, 10-year plan called Moving Ontario Forward, which will invest in transit and transportation infrastructure right across the province, and we've already delivered in other ways.

Using the member's region in particular, our government is investing in the Ottawa LRT. We've invested \$600 million in that project. This is the single largest investment ever made to that city's public transit system from the provincial government.

But we're also investing in local transit all over Ontario by providing municipalities with permanent gas tax funding to support their transit growth.

Whether it's Moving Ontario Forward or gas tax funding, we are committed to building up all of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I thank the minister for his response. It's good to know that our government is committed to making transit investments that count in Ottawa. The Ottawa LRT is a great project that will help commuters get moving across the city.

Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned that our government is supporting local transit systems through gas tax funding. I know that Ottawa received over \$33 million in gas tax funding this year to support public transit. Could the minister please tell the members of this House more about the gas tax program and how it can help those living in our communities?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank that member again for that outstanding question.

Just a number of days ago, I was happy to announce the amount of gas tax funding being provided to municipalities this year to support their local transit. The member mentioned that Ottawa is receiving over \$33 million in gas tax funding, but I want to highlight the fact that over \$321 million is being provided to communities all over Ontario. This means that municipalities—whether it's Ottawa, Waterloo, Windsor or Sudbury—will be able to continue to invest in their local transit systems.

Through the 2013 budget, our government made two cents on every litre of gas a permanent source of funding for municipalities. This funding demonstrates that our government is committed to improving public transit all over Ontario. We'll continue to work closely with our municipal partners to make sure that wherever they are, we continue to make those investments in transportation that matter to Ontarians.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In responding to my leader's question earlier today, you said you would "personally address any issues with specific clients who say they are not getting the care they need."

Minister, I have a letter from you from last week saying you cannot intervene in matters concerning the provision of CCAC home care. Which is it: You can address specific issues, or you can't?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite knows that I'm happy to sit down any time with any member of this Legislature and speak about individual cases. If they feel that an individual is not receiving the support they require, that's part of my job. It's a responsibility that I take very seriously. If there are specific instances with the member opposite, I'm more than happy to sit down with her and see what we can do.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, from time to time reassessments are made of individuals in home care. Sometimes those individuals require more care based on the assessment, and sometimes they require a little bit less. Those are some of the changes that naturally occur within a home care system that we're continuing to fund. But I would certainly offer and encourage the member opposite to sit down with me and discuss particulars.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, then you better block off a week, because I deal with these CCAC questions all the time in the constituency office. We need to know, when we write you, that you're actually going to do something about it.

The CCAC is funded 100% by your ministry. Our constituents need to know that when they need home care, it will be there.

Will you commit to review the decision by Central West CCAC to ensure their budget is being used for front-line care, and when MPPs write you on behalf of our constituents, you will not dismiss us out of hand?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Members on all sides of this Legislature know—those who have come forward and worked with me in a co-operative fashion on individual cases, whether it's to do with home care or any situation with regard to health care—that I work as hard as I can, and constructively. Party politics does not get into this in any fashion. So I would again encourage the member to sit down with me and talk about the particulars.

The truth is, we are investing \$4 billion-plus in home and community care. We're doing the best that we can with our local LHINs—the LHINs that, of course, are the objects the official opposition would have gotten rid of in the first place—and the LHINs with our CCACs, to make sure that we're providing the care to those who need it most.

Obviously, as with all that we do in government, we have budgets, but the budget for our CCACs is going up as we continue to move care closer to where people live.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, l'honorable Jeff Leal.

Speaker, as the saying goes, farmers feed cities, and we in the government recognize that they are an integral part of our \$34-billion agri-food industry. But if this already important industrial sector is going to continue to grow, to flourish and to compete globally, more needs to be done in partnership by both government and industry.

In October 2013, the Premier challenged Ontario's agri-food industry to double its growth rate and create more than 120,000 new jobs by 2020. This challenge is an opportunity to demonstrate how this sector makes an important and essential contribution to our economy and our quality of life.

Minister, can you update this House, citing your own remarks to industry leaders at the Premier's annual agri-food summit? What is the status of the challenge?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for a very thoughtful question this morning.

Just last week, the Premier and I had the opportunity to participate in the ninth Premier's agri-food summit, along with many members from outside of the House.

Our government fully supports growth, investment and innovation opportunities in the province's agri-food sector.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to give you a bit of an update. Since the Premier issued the challenge last year, Ontario has created 17,000 new jobs in the agri-food sector and increased our exports by \$1.1 billion.

There is always more to do. Our critical path to growth requires government and industry to play a role. That's why we're working with our industry partners to establish a growth measurement system to help identify opportunities and measure progress through a new growth steering committee. It will bring together industry and government leaders and experts to identify opportunities to help the industry meet the growth challenge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: The numbers, commitment and energy all demonstrate a formidable political will.

It's apparent that in the year since the Premier's agri-food challenge was issued, the agri-food sector has done remarkable things.

Building on the success of last year, the new growth steering committee will assist in driving the agri-food industry's growth and create jobs right across the province.

Nevertheless, Minister, many Ontarians across the province are concerned about red tape, what it means for Ontario farmers and how it might potentially stand in the way of meeting the Premier's challenge. This is especially so in the light of the government's recent decision around neonicotinoids, which are a class of neurologically active insecticides similar in chemical structure to good old nicotine.

Minister, what is our response to people who claim that government is increasing regulation at a time when we are tasked with growing the agri-food industry?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for his great interest in the agricultural sector in the province of Ontario.

I know all of us are always very concerned about regulatory burdens and what impact they might have on Ontario farmers.

As you know, there are many people in Ontario today who are concerned about the challenge we face to reduce the use of neonics, which we announced last week.

I want to be very clear—and this is what Premier Wynne said at the agri-food summit last week: It's not about some kind of agenda that would lead to more regulatory burden for Ontario's farmers. We are committed to addressing the challenges of producers as we develop and implement new controls. We also remain committed to working with our farmers in Ontario with our very successful Open for Business forum, to reduce red tape in the agriculture sector.

We have had many more successes on that front, and we want to achieve more: addressing red tape, being environmental stewards and growing the industry together—very important to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Minister, you require all affordable housing corporations in Ontario to purchase services through the Housing Services Corp., which, of course, is your appointed corporation. The problem is that this organization funds their operating expenses, including almost \$6.5 million in salaries, by charging social service housing organizations a premium on services such as natural gas and insurance.

We've heard from multiple municipalities that they would save money by purchasing directly—in some cases, millions of dollars that could go into affordable housing. They asked you if they could opt out. So why are you forcing them to give money to the housing corporation and not letting them buy at the best price they can get?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I am only aware of one municipality that has asked for the option to opt out. We took a serious look at that and discovered that the economies of scale for all the other municipalities would be so discouragingly hurt by that that the decision was taken not to do that. We've communicated that with the municipality that made that request. That is, at the moment, our position, unless and until we get other information that may cause us to rethink it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I appreciate the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for his activities today and the fact that he's wearing his hat. I'd like to give him permission to wear it for the whole day.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Mississippi—sorry. I was looking over there. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, thank y'all.

Speaker, coming very—well, actually, just present in the Speaker's gallery, I would like to draw members' attention to two very special people: Tyler Miller, a Paralympian for the men's wheelchair basketball league for Team Canada, and François Robert, a member of the Canadian Paralympic Committee, who are visiting the Legislature and who hope that we will all join them for their reception tonight.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. I coached the Brantford Bobcats a long time ago.

Interjections: A long time ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You don't have to be so agreeable.

Introduction of guests.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I would like to acknowledge Rick Kennedy, the co-chair of Ontario's Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS, who is here with us today to mark World Aids Day. Thank you, and welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. We're glad you're here.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I too would like to say hello to Tyler Miller, who is actually from my riding, Kitchener Centre. It's very nice connecting with you, and all the best to you at the games.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I just noticed these beautiful children coming in from some school in Ontario, and I just want to welcome them to Queen's Park. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll call this a happy afternoon. I thank all members for their introductions and all our guests for being here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Perth-Wellington needs more family doctors. The government should be well aware of that fact; for the last three years, my constituents and I have told them so.

In July, I asked the minister for information on a number of my constituents registered with the government's Health Care Connect program and how long they are expected to wait on that list to be matched with a new doctor. The numbers are staggering, and they support the

point that my constituents and I have been making for years.

According to the minister, on average, individuals from Perth-Wellington who are currently registered with Health Care Connect have been waiting on the list for 309 days. As of March 31, 2014, there was an estimate of 927 individuals from Perth-Wellington registered with Health Care Connect. Since March 2014, another doctor in Perth-Wellington has closed his practice, so that number must be even higher today.

Many of my constituents would find it inexcusable that the government is aware of these facts but has offered no effective plan to address the issue. This morning, in a letter that I hand-delivered to the minister, I expressed my dissatisfaction with the government's action to date. I also called on him to take the necessary steps to improve the situation. I hope the minister will listen. I hope he will ensure that everyone in Perth-Wellington has access to the medical care they deserve now, not 309 days down the road.

JOHN MCGIVNEY CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Last week, I had the opportunity to tour the John McGivney Children's Centre in my riding of Windsor West. Since opening its doors in 1978, the centre continues to provide rehabilitative services and resources to children and youth with special needs and is one out of only 21 children's treatment centres in Ontario.

While the centre offers a number of excellent programs off-site and at the JMCC school, their early childhood preschool program is second to none and a true asset to our community. This unique preschool provides students with a multidisciplinary atmosphere that incorporates therapy and family goals into a learning environment. The preschool specializes in dedicated programming designed to maximize a student's development and functional communication, literacy, numeracy and social skills.

Ensuring that children with special needs understand their self-worth and realize their potential is at the core of this model. This exceptional programming, combined with the expert faculty and staff, allows the John McGivney Children's Centre preschool to offer youth and their families a transformative experience that they would not receive in a less specialized setting. This is an excellent program, and its value to the development of children, families and our community as a whole cannot be understated.

I would like to thank CEO Elaine Whitmore, executive assistant Karen Mongeau and Anita Hayes, manager of the preschool program, for their tireless efforts in developing and administering this program, along with everyone at the John McGivney Children's Centre for their hard work and dedication. I've risen many times in this chamber to boast of the sense of community and culture of acceptance in Windsor, and it is institutions

like John McGivney Children's Centre that prove my point.

WORLDS AIDS DAY

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to mark World AIDS Day. This day gives us the opportunity to celebrate how far we've come over the past 35 years and to reflect on the work that still must be done to put HIV/AIDS behind us forever. December 1 also marks the start of Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week in Canada. This year's World AIDS Day theme is "Focus, Partner, Achieve: an AIDS-Free Generation." These words summarize the goals of our HIV/AIDS programs in Ontario.

HIV/AIDS continues to be a serious concern. It is listed by the World Health Organization as one of the top 10 leading causes of death worldwide. In Ontario alone, there were 843 newly diagnosed cases in 2012, but there is hope. Since 2004, the number of new HIV cases has been trending downward. This is due in large part to our government's approach toward HIV/AIDS. Our strategy is focused on prevention but also on education, testing, treatment, support services, research and, most importantly, reducing the stigma towards those suffering from HIV/AIDS. Our achievements are also the result of strong partnerships and the hard work of our community partners.

I'm pleased to say that we are entering a very optimistic time in the history of our fight to end HIV/AIDS.

MAJESTIC WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to share in the celebration of the Majestic Women's Institute's 75th anniversary. On November 12, I had the pleasure of joining the celebrations in Brussels at the Melville Presbyterian Church, where I presented President Ruth Bauer a certificate of celebration in recognition of the group's efforts since their establishment in 1939.

Women's institutes across Ontario offer educational programming and community support for women in rural Ontario. Together, members identify needs in their community, advocate for social, environmental and economic change and work towards the personal growth of all women, for home and country. Over the last 75 years, women's institutes have advocated for the many notable changes in their communities, ranging from the mandatory pasteurization of milk to promoting safe streets with crosswalks and flashing lights on school buses.

It's important to recognize groups such as the women's institute, who encourage women's participation and leadership within their communities. As a member of the steering committee for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Canadian region, I recognize the value and strength that women can contribute to society when given the opportunity.

I tip my hat again to the Majestic Women's Institute on their 75th anniversary. It's a very special rural

women's organization. As they live by the Mary Stewart Collect, they never forget to be kind.

EVENTS IN NEW LISKEARD

Mr. John Vanthof: This weekend, the sound of swords and musket volleys broke the silence of the usually peaceful streets in New Liskeard. No, it was not a local uprising but rather a re-enactment of life in a New France Christmas village. The actors were local volunteers who took part in the first annual Village Noël project in Temiskaming Shores. The main streets were cordoned off and cars were replaced with cedar kiosks with local crafts and foods. Carollers and voyageurs wandered among the fire pits. It was a beautiful scene and a worthy reminder of our French Canadian heritage.

Sadly, early Saturday morning, another sound woke residents: the wail of fire trucks and ambulances, as part of New Liskeard's downtown core was on fire. Several people were taken to hospital. Six families lost their belongings and two businesses were destroyed. Glenn Walton Shoes was a landmark in our area. The shoe store was opened in 1953. Glenn took over in 1958 and sold the business to his daughter in 2013. Glenn and his family also lost a lifetime of memories in the fire, including his trophy fish and hunting pictures. Tammy Penner had operated Watch Me Grow for over eight years, and she is devastated by the loss of her business. In the end, the firemen at the scene had to destroy the building to get the fire completely under control.

1310

Because of the fire, a large portion of Village Noël was itself cordoned off. In a true show of voyageur resilience, the organizers regrouped, moved the entertainment venues and extended the hours on Sunday to accommodate the annual Santa Claus parade, which had to be moved from Saturday.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank not only the volunteers of Village Noël but the firefighters and other first responders who keep us safe and make our area such a great place to live.

YORK MEMORIAL COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise today to speak about York Memorial Collegiate Institute, one of the oldest schools in Toronto, located in my riding of York South-Weston. York Memo, an institution of higher learning built in memory of the youth killed in the First World War, this year is celebrating its 85th anniversary.

The school has consistently provided the highest quality of education to each and every student who has entered its doors since the school's inception in 1929. York Memorial has also developed one of the most impressive advancement placement programs in this province, offering more competitive AP courses than any other secondary school in Ontario. These challenging courses are recognized nationally, internationally and in

many universities. In fact, four years ago York Memorial had eight national AP scholars. This was the highest number of any school in Ontario.

York Memorial Collegiate counts a number of notable alumni. One sits with us today in this Legislature, notably the member from Oakville, now Minister of Labour. The member for Scarborough–Agincourt also served there, as a public nurse.

I am very proud of this institution, Mr. Speaker. My sincerest congratulations go to the principal, Mrs. Suzanna Greenaway, the staff and all the students for celebrating this impressive milestone.

SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRALE
DE LA FRANCOPHONIE
SECRETARY GENERAL OF LA
FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} Gila Martow: En mon nom et au nom de tout le caucus conservateur de l'Ontario, je tiens à exprimer mes félicitations les plus sincères à l'ancienne gouverneure générale, Michaëlle Jean, qui, comme nous le savons, vient d'être choisie comme nouvelle Secrétaire générale de la Francophonie et la première secrétaire générale féminine.

Je suis convaincue que durant son mandat de quatre ans elle sera un ardent défenseur des questions de la langue française et de la culture française, afin de promouvoir la langue et de renforcer l'action économique dans le monde francophone.

En tant que femme dans la politique qui parle français et la porte-parole des affaires francophones de notre caucus, je suis, une fois de plus, ravie d'exprimer mes meilleurs vœux. Je sais que les quatre prochaines années seront un mandat difficile, mais elles seront très enrichissantes. J'ai hâte de travailler avec la Francophonie afin de renforcer les relations francophones de l'Ontario, du Canada et du monde entier. Encore une fois, félicitations.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself and the entire PC caucus, I would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to former Governor General Michaëlle Jean, who has just been chosen la francophonie's newest secretary general and the first female.

PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I'd like to recognize some true Canadian role models today from the Canadian Paralympic Committee who focus on creating a province and indeed a nation where every person who lives and works among us can participate in sport, whether or not he or she is living with a disability. Roughly one in seven people in the province of Ontario have a disability. That's more than a million Ontarians; and worldwide, that's more than a billion people who live with a disability.

Earlier, I recognized Tyler Miller in the Speaker's gallery, who is visiting Queen's Park today, who is here

in support of the Canadian Paralympic Committee and their efforts across Canada. In 2012, Tyler successfully took part in the Paralympic Games in London, England, where Team Canada captured a gold medal in his sport of basketball.

In addition to his success, Tyler received the 2012 Civitan Sports Award for top athlete of the year for Kitchener and Waterloo. In 2010, Tyler Miller was part of the team that played for 24 hours straight, breaking the record for the longest wheelchair basketball game ever played. Tyler will represent Team Canada at the Toronto Parapan Games in men's wheelchair basketball.

This afternoon the Canadian Paralympic Committee is hosting a reception from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in room 230. Let's welcome the Canadian Paralympic Committee as they continue to grow the Paralympic movement leading up to the 2015 Pan Am Games.

JOURNÉE MONDIALE DU SIDA

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: La Journée mondiale du SIDA, qui a lieu aujourd'hui le 1^{er} décembre, offre une occasion importante de se souvenir de ceux et celles qui nous ont quittés, ainsi que de sensibiliser le public au SIDA et au virus du VIH. Cette année, la Journée mondiale du SIDA porte le thème « Objectif zéro ». C'est-à-dire zéro nouvelle infection au VIH, zéro discrimination, et zéro décès lié au SIDA.

La semaine passée, j'ai eu l'honneur de rencontrer Khaled Salam et Gord Asmus du comité du SIDA d'Ottawa. Le CSO est un organisme communautaire à but non lucratif offrant des services gratuits et confidentiels pour toutes les personnes vivant avec ou présentant un risque d'infection pour le VIH dans la région d'Ottawa.

À ses débuts, en 1985, le CSO était un petit groupe de personnes d'orientation homosexuelle, mais aujourd'hui il compte un grand nombre de bénévoles, de participants et de personnel. MM. Salam et Asmus m'ont présenté des données qui indiquent qu'il y a à peu près 900 nouveaux diagnostics du SIDA par année en Ontario, dont plus de 100 à Ottawa. Ils ont souligné que même en 2014 le contrôle de cette maladie exige, comme outil principal, la lutte contre la stigmatisation, la discrimination et l'homophobie. Aidons-les en nous informant davantage au sujet du SIDA et de l'infection VIH et en oubliant nos propres préjugés. Merci.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker. I beg your indulgence. I know that it's stepping out of bounds a little bit here, but I have two guests from the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West: Jeff and Angela Hurst. Welcome to Queen's Park.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated July 24, 2014, the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and the supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than Thursday, November 27, 2014.

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain ministries and offices on Thursday, November 27, 2014, as required by the order of the House dated July 24, 2014, and pursuant to standing order 63(b), the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the Office of Francophone Affairs, and Ministry of Consumer Services are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Accordingly, the estimates 2014-15 of these ministries and offices are deemed to be passed by the Standing Committee on Estimates and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

UTILITY TASK AND ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LES AUTOQUADS ET LES VÉHICULES POLYVALENTS

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to utility task and all-terrain vehicles / Projet de loi 51, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les autoquads et les véhicules polyvalents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Norm Miller: The Utility Task and All-Terrain Vehicles Act, 2014, amends the Highway Traffic Act to provide that no person shall drive an off-road vehicle on a highway except in accordance with the stated exceptions. One of the exceptions is that a utility task vehicle may be driven on any highway on which an all-terrain vehicle may be driven, and that any regulations or bylaws applicable to all-terrain vehicles also apply to utility task vehicles. A utility task vehicle is defined as an off-road vehicle meeting certain specifications, including the specification that the vehicle is designed to carry a

driver and one or more passengers, so it applies to side-by-side ATVs.

1320

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Mme Meilleur moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I rise in the House today to reintroduce legislation originally brought forward by my predecessor the Honourable John Gerretsen in 2013.

As members will recall, the proposed Protection of Public Participation Act seeks to balance the protection of public participation and freedom of expression and the protection of reputation and economic interests.

Je suis fière du projet de loi que nous présentons aujourd'hui, and I call upon all the members to support this bill.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Good afternoon. I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, December 1, 2014, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, December 1, 2014, for the purpose of considering government business. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1323 to 1328.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats.

Mr. Naqvi moved that, pursuant to standing 6(c)(i), the House shall move to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, Decem-

ber 1, 2014, for the purpose of considering government business.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Miltzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Oraziotti, David
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Bailey, Robert	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Barrett, Toby	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	Vanhof, John
Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick	Yakubski, John
Hillier, Randy	Pettapiece, Randy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 23.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

1330

PETITIONS

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

"Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

I fully support, will affix my name and send it with page Steven.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Peter Tabuns: "Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

"Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I have signed this petition, and I give it to page Ethan for the Clerk.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government introduced Bill 10—Child Care Modernization Act on July 10, 2014;

"Whereas the passage of the bill will result in the elimination of 140,000 child care spaces in Ontario and increase child care costs by 30-40%, especially in rural and suburban areas;

"Whereas Bill 10 could force licensed daycare providers to close, impacting religious day schools, private schools and Montessori schools as well;

"Whereas the Liberal government has asked for quick passage of the bill but has not properly considered these repercussions for all Ontario parents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government conduct province-wide consultation during the 2014-2015 legislative winter recess at which time the Minister of Education will travel across the province to Hamilton, Guelph, Ottawa, Kitchener, London, Windsor, Sudbury and Toronto to consult with parents and child care workers to understand how the bill will negatively affect Ontario children, parents and child care workers."

I agree with this petition and send it with page Hannah.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas accessibility to our public health care system is a foundational value of Ontario; and

"Whereas all individuals should have equal access to health care services regardless of their ability to pay; and

"Whereas patients requiring health care services often have to drive to a hospital to receive these services; and

"Whereas hospitals are increasingly using parking charges as an avenue for revenue generation thereby impacting some patients' access based on their ability to pay; and

"Whereas the Liberal Party promised during the 2014 election campaign to cap hospital parking fees;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the government of Ontario follow through on their commitment to cap parking fees at Ontario's hospitals at a level that ensures equitable access to health care."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to give it to page Moiz to bring to the Clerk.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I couldn't agree more with this petition. I'm going to affix my name and send it to the table with page Hannah.

RURAL AND NORTHERN ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—this is kind of a shout-out to our old colleague Johnny O'Toole. He used to do these fairly regularly, and I wanted to get it on the record for Johnny.

"Whereas the loss of transportation service will further destabilize rural economies and impede on residents' ability to get to school, work, doctor or hospital appointments, or any other service unavailable locally;

"Whereas the prosperity, productivity and participation of all segments of society depends on a viable, accessible transportation network;

"Whereas the lack of a transportation service negatively impacts those people with special needs, accessibility challenges, seniors and those living below the poverty level;

"Whereas Greyhound Canada plans to cut bus service and Via Rail plans to cut train service in rural Ontario;

"Whereas there is no secondary carrier serving rural Ontario's students, workers, volunteers, tourists, business travellers and any resident without a driver's licence;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately strike an all-party committee at Queen's Park to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario."

I fully support this, will affix my name and send it with page Kate.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

"Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

"Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

"Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into

account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In doing so, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year."

I wholeheartedly support this petition and present it to page Maja to bring it down to the table and the Clerks.

1340

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I have a petition sent to me by a number of my constituents, actually, in Meadowvale and also in Erin Mills. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds ... and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I'm prepared to sign and support this petition, and send it down with page Noah.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

"Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

"Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially fixed-income seniors; and

"Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges."

I fully support it, will affix my signature and send it with page Ethan.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's youth justice facilities are run by two completely different sets of policy guidelines depending on whether they are part of the Ontario public service (OPS) and funded directly by the provincial government, or the broader public service (BPS) and funded indirectly; and

"Whereas OPS and BPS facilities serve the very same youth, and both receive their funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; and

"Whereas unlike in similar OPS facilities, there is no provincial mandate for youth corrections community agencies to provide WSIB coverage, meaning many agencies have inadequate private insurance coverage; and

"Whereas youth corrections community agencies are struggling with chronic underfunding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We strongly urge the provision of a provincial mandate for all youth corrections agencies to provide WSIB coverage to their staff. We further urge the assembly to improve systemic inequities by ensuring that all youth corrections facilities receive proper funding."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to sign my name to it and give it to page Hannah to bring to the Clerks' table.

CREDIT UNIONS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Mr. Speaker, this concerns Credit Unions of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the ... growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I put my name to this and support it, and will give it to page Albany.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario’s largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on wind development projects awaiting approval until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

“Whereas the provincial Liberal government’s study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

“Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately.”

I support this petition, will affix my name send it with page Ella.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads ‘that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles’;

“Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

“Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Elijah to bring it down to the Clerks.

LEGAL AID

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have here with me a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

“Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

“Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the 2012-13 budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner.”

I agree with this petition. I will be putting my signature on it and handing it to page Steven.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD CARE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES DE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Mrs. Sandals moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, the Education Act and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 10, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et apportant des modifications corrélatives et connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I seek unanimous consent that the rotation for debate on third reading of Bill 10 be such that the third party speak first, the government second and the official opposition third.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Education is seeking unanimous consent of the House to change the rotation for speaking, such that the third

party speaks first, the government speaks second and the official opposition speaks third. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I want to start off by thanking the Minister of Education and the opposition critic for education for their courtesy in allowing me to speak first. I have limited time here, Speaker. I'm supposed to be going down to chair a committee very shortly, but I appreciate this opportunity, even in a truncated way, to make some commentary on this bill.

This bill is a response to a concern about legislation that is well over 40 years old and also a response to the deaths of a number of children in unlicensed care that have occurred here in Ontario over the last few years.

We support the introduction of stronger standards for all child care providers. That is a positive development.

1350

However, we are very concerned with what was left undone with this bill. An increase of inspection staff from 54 to 60 for services that look after hundreds of thousands of children does not strike us as an adequate response, an adequate investment in investigation and in enforcement. The absence of investment in new public and non-profit child care—in fact, the loss of child care centres in places like Sarnia—strikes us as retrograde. The most effective method of ensuring safe, high-quality, affordable child care is investment in non-profit and public child care. This bill is not being advanced as part of a larger program of investing in and reshaping the child care movement. That is a substantial omission.

No bill alone is enough to ensure that child care is safe, affordable, available and of high quality. As I said at the beginning, we need an investment in implementation of a larger program of non-profit care. This bill doesn't do that.

The bill also leaves the power to set ratios of providers to children in centres, except for the limitations on home-based care addressed in the bill. However, the ratios previously set in legislation for centre-based care are now entirely in the hands of cabinet. An amendment to have any change in those ratios subject to public hearings and a vote in a legislative committee was rejected by the Liberal government.

Speaker, when the government introduced the change in ratios earlier this year, there was substantial concern in the child care community, in the education community and amongst parents. I understand the need, as time goes by, to reassess the appropriateness of any given ratio of caregivers to children. But in the end, this is a central concern. It bears directly on the quality of the care that is offered and, as such, is something most properly set in an open and public vote that takes place here in the Legislature. If it's not to be in the legislation, then it should have been put forward in a forum that would allow debate and amendment in a committee of this Legislature, in full public view.

Speaker, this bill is an incomplete response to the child care crisis, but beyond that, I believe that the limita-

tion of democratic rights in the passage of this bill was startling. Time was set in committee that would have allowed six hours or more for debate and votes on the substance of the bill. However, actual debate was only allowed in the first hour of committee time.

A critical part of any democratic process is debate. Governments propose, opposition parties propose, and in the course of debating a bill in committee, the public gets a fuller sense of what is meant by this or that action, and the potential is there, the ability is there to take apart proposals, to make it clearer to the public what is really happening here. If you want to have a democratic society in which legislators can be held to account, you also have to have a society in which legislators are required to defend the positions they take and the proposals they put forward. But when the committee is reduced to silence, when that one hour was up, the hour within which questions could be asked or arguments made, and we went solely to voting for or against amendments, then the responsibility for the government to defend its position was removed. The public was shortchanged.

Speaker, people in this province expect opposition parties to work with the government when it's doing something that advances the interests of the public. They expect opposition parties to oppose the government when they believe what the government is doing is contrary to public interest. I believe this bill should be adopted, but I have to say, the throttling of democracy through time allocation was a huge mistake on the part of the government, and although I think it's pretty much inside baseball—throughout most of Ontario, people didn't pay much attention to how much time was allocated for this debate—in the long run, people will notice that debate is cut off and they will notice that government is less open, less accountable.

It's on that note that I'll wrap up my remarks. I would hope the government would change its ways when it comes to allowing democratic debate in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, I stand in the House today with great pride in support of the Child Care Modernization Act. Before I begin, I want to thank everyone for their hard work on this piece of legislation. I'd like to thank my parliamentary assistant, the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, and I'd also like to thank the members of the social policy committee. I would also like to thank everyone who participated in public hearings for your valuable input.

As you know, in July this year we reintroduced Bill 10 because this groundbreaking legislation has always been a top priority for our government. We want to build a child care system that is high-quality, seamless and more accessible for the province's families, and we are committed to transforming Ontario's child care and early years programs and services to give children in this great province the best possible start in life. That is why I'm so proud to rise in this House today to discuss this important legislation.

Bill 10, if passed, will modernize our child care and early years system and replace the outdated legislation governing child care in this province. It will make our system more responsive to parents' and children's needs and better reflect the realities of our modern world. It will ensure Ontario families have access to safe and high-quality care to give children the precious head start they need for lifelong success and, if passed, it will also strengthen oversight in the child care sector.

This is truly a transformative piece of legislation that will position Ontario as a leader in child care and early years programs and services. One way Bill 10 will modernize our early years system is by eliminating the patchwork of rules and regulations that govern child care. It will do this by repealing and replacing the Day Nurseries Act, the outdated legislation responsible for child care in Ontario. The DNA was originally legislated in the 1940s and hasn't changed fundamentally since the 1980s.

Bill 10 will also amend the Education Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act. Since the safety of our children is of paramount importance, this legislation will give the government a range of new enforcement tools to protect Ontario's children and safeguard their well-being. Parents need to know that their children are in a safe, nurturing environment, and they need to know the government can step in if their children's safety is at risk.

This proposed legislation also reflects valuable input from our stakeholders and from the public. In 2012, we received over 400 submissions from municipalities, licensed and unlicensed child care providers, First Nations, child care advocates, other child care and early years partners and, of course, parents. We also held public hearings at the Standing Committee on Social Policy, and after listening to comments from impacted stakeholders in the public hearings, our government has made several amendments to Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act.

Under Bill 10, licensed and unlicensed home providers would be required to count their own children under age six as part of the total number of children allowed.

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Our government heard from unlicensed child care providers who were concerned about how this would affect them and the children in their care. That's why we've made an amendment for a provider to exclude counting their own children who are four and five years old if the provider's children are enrolled in full-day kindergarten and if they care for fewer than two children under two and meet the other prescribed criteria. This change provides home-based child care providers with flexibility, and it acknowledges the full implementation of FDK.

We also heard concerns about joining licensed agencies, so another amendment allows the government to regulate the fees of licensed child care agencies. This directly addresses the concerns that independent child care providers who choose to be licensed would be subject to very high agency fees.

Under Bill 10, the ministry could also regulate how agencies operate. This could mean different service models, so licensed child care providers could, for example, pick and choose and only pay for agency services and supports they actually need.

We also heard concerns about providers turning away children and families who they've known and cared for in their neighbourhoods. An amendment has been made to clarify that the five-child maximum supports quality care but does not restrict providers from caring for different children at different times. This relates to concerns raised by providers who offer service 24 hours a day or seven days a week. Providers will be able to offer care to families with different work arrangements, such as evening and weekend shifts, or to families who need overnight care, provided that a maximum of five children are being cared for at any given time.

Another amendment allows existing unlicensed child care arrangements to continue until January 1, 2016—another full year—or another date prescribed by regulation if the proclamation is later than that. This would allow children in a legal unlicensed setting to stay with their current provider for at least one year, should the bill pass. This change addresses concerns that parents and children would be abruptly turned away by caregivers and left scrambling for child care with little or no notice.

That's why, if passed, we want to ensure that changes to the child care sector can happen incrementally and gradually, to support a smooth transition and reduce disruptions for Ontario families.

Some important amendments were also made in response to the Ombudsman's recent report on unlicensed child care, and to more effectively support enforcement and compliance under the proposed act. This includes closing loopholes allowing illegal child care providers to call themselves camps and avoid enforcement and prosecution, and also strengthening the ability to collect video and photographic evidence to support more effective enforcement of the act.

All along, our government has remained committed to ensuring that families have access to safe, modern child care. As part of this commitment, our government supported a number of amendments to reinforce and strengthen the enforcement measures in this bill. Our government acknowledges that several constructive motions were presented by the third party's critic, the member from Toronto—Danforth, and I want to thank him for his input. We accepted these changes in order to strengthen the bill even further. This includes clarifying that the role of the minister includes enforcement of the proposed legislation.

However, Speaker, our government also rejected a number of proposed amendments from the official opposition. These would have restricted and weakened the available range of enforcement tools. We believe that robust enforcement measures are necessary to protect the province's children and to safeguard their well-being.

Therefore, when we look at Ontario's child care and early years system, we can honestly say it has served us

well and we have made some truly great strides with our ambitious plans for modernizing the system.

Although we made changes to strengthen the bill, I feel it is important to stress that further details for a number of matters need to be established by regulation. For example, licensing standards, including age groupings and staff-to-child ratios in centre-based care; setting the administrative penalty for violations under the act and/or its regulations; and additional details clarifying what programs and services are exempt from child care or are not required to be licensed must all be specified by regulation.

We will work closely with all partners in the child care sector on the development of these regulations, and they will all be posted for public comment. Further, if Bill 10 passes, changes to the child care sector will be implemented in an incremental and gradual process, to support a smooth transition and reduce disruptions to services for families.

Our system is governed by a mix of rules and regulations, and it no longer reflects the realities of our modern world. That is why I'm encouraging all members of this House to rise in support of Bill 10 and improve the lives of children across this great province. With this bill, Ontario will be a leader, and we will solve the problems caused by the outdated legislation governing this sector. That's why it's critical that we pass this bill, so I am looking to all members in this House for their firm support on this important legislation. By passing Bill 10, everyone in this House will deliver on benefits that contribute to our future prosperity.

We all want to make Ontario a better place. That is why, in the spirit of true partnership and bipartisan goodwill, I urge all members to stand up and think about our children. Ontario needs a child care and early years system that gives children the best possible start in life, a system that puts each and every one of our youngest and brightest on a firm path to lifelong success. I'm confident that the Child Care Modernization Act will help us do just that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today and speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus on Bill 10. I can tell you right up front, Mr. Speaker, in spite of what the minister said, that there is absolutely no way that the Progressive Conservative caucus can support this bill. There are so many things wrong with the bill, and what's more important: I hear the minister talking about slow transition and consultation, and then I think that we put this bill through the Legislature basically at rocket speed.

I became the critic of education back in June, and I immediately started to get letters of concern from people all across the province, particularly the independent child care providers who have been completely left out of the consultation—completely. I immediately came to my House leader, the member from Leeds-Grenville, and gave him a letter to take to the House leaders' meeting. I felt that this bill was so important, because it includes

communities from right across our province. Whether it's aboriginal daycare, francophone daycare, rural or urban, it included children from all across the province of Ontario, and I felt that there should be travel on this bill.

What we got was just the opposite. We got a time allocation motion to limit debate to six hours in the House for second reading. That led to a total of 10 hours of hearings, two hours of clause-by-clause—although there were actually 12 or 14 hours allocated, but because of the motions, there was absolutely no debate on the 93 motions. We had no opportunity to even speak on anything that came up in the committee, even to make a comment on it. It was yes or no, so we asked for recorded votes. You may recall that we voted against all of the motions on it, because it was actually disgraceful how it was put through—so, no debate on that.

What gets me is that, at the same time, we're time-allocating a bill here in the House on transparency in government. We're actually talking about a transparent government at the same time we're time-allocating a bill for children.

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About 800,000 children in the province of Ontario are cared for by independent child care providers. They are not licensed but they are not illegal, and they were branded as almost criminals by this government. They were not allowed to speak. In fact, we held rallies across the province, including one in the minister's home riding, where she never appeared. When we asked for one in Ottawa—we had a rally in Ottawa, and a few people came out. But when the minister came to Ottawa, she came in the quiet of the night, and she met with only the Liberal members. If the people in the Ottawa area had known the minister was there, we would have had 500 or 600 people at that rally. That is absolutely for sure. It was kept quiet by the House leader, who is also the Minister of Community Safety.

They can heckle; they can do whatever they want. But this bill is a disgrace to the young people, the young men and women who are raising their families in the province of Ontario, who have children, that this bill would be time-allocated, that it would be pushed through this House at a high rate of speed.

She just mentioned a slow transition a couple of minutes ago. Why couldn't we take a little more time with the bill to begin with? I would have loved to have travelled out, say, to Sudbury or to Windsor or to Kitchener or London. These people needed an opportunity. Most of them could not afford to come to these hearings.

Another thing that bothers me is that some of the people who appeared at the hearings, some of the agency people who helped draft the original bill, are also the people who made comment at the hearings. I think, in a way, those people kind of threw a lot of the members of the independent child care providers under the bus on this bill. That's very disturbing as well, because I know they're very fond of the government, and they think it's wonderful and all this sort of thing.

In the end, there are going to be thousands and thousands—we calculated a minimum of 140,000 daycare

spaces lost in the province by the independent child care providers. Those that are not going to be shutting their doors will have to go underground. That's what's going to happen.

People with two and three little kids—someone in a house who has traditionally had daycare for a couple of children, and they have two children of their own, can only have—it's limited to two under two. There are all kinds of examples of unlicensed daycare where they have been perfectly handled for many, many years, working under those programs. Over those years, there have been no accidents; there have been no complaints. As a result of that, the government just said, "To heck with those people. They're going to be out of business." There are going to be about 140,000 daycare spaces lost for sure.

We know there's going to be no more money in education, because they've just cut \$500 million out of the budget.

Who is going to enforce this? Six more people are going to be hired to enforce Bill 10 in the province of Ontario, and that's going to work? Six more people? How many people have they hired for the Ontario College of Trades? Have you ever thought of that? There are 70 or so right now, running around the province, doing nothing except harassing businesses that are following the rules.

But instead, because there's no money in this—with the College of Trades, of course, the tradespeople are paying for those 60 people with their membership fees. However, with daycare, that's supposed to be paid for by the Ministry of Education. We've gone from 54 to 60 enforcement officers for the Ministry of Education, and we're still trying to figure out where that will be paid.

I find that this bill has been a disaster. Mr. Speaker, I just want you to know also that I've been to see the Ombudsman. I know that my colleague from Nepean-Carleton has also been to see the Ombudsman as well. We've voiced our concerns, because the Liberal government of Ontario and the Minister of Education were leaning on the back of—they were trying to get support of the Ombudsman to say they were wonderfully perfect people. The Ombudsman has no intentions of trying to put people out of business, but this bill will do that.

In fact, because of that, every time a business goes down now, or they're going to be shut down, those people will be reporting that back to the Ombudsman, because he specifically asked to keep a report card on what was happening with the independent child care providers.

Obviously, the biggest problem here was the all-day kindergarten, because it took a lot more children out of the daycare system and put them into the hands of the Ministry of Education at the elementary school level, which freed up a lot of spaces in the agency areas. Of course, now the agency areas want any kids they can possibly get to go into their school system.

There are three other members of our caucus who want to speak to this today, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that through this whole thing—in fact, one day the minister, on a question, actually accused us of playing

games. Imagine calling the official opposition—mentioning that we were playing games with this bill. Now, if you call time allocation by the government playing games; if you call a meeting with the Ombudsman playing games; if you call having rallies to protect the people who have asked you to get their support; if you call answering emails and answering letters from members of the government that they refused to answer—if those are playing games, I like being the official opposition. I'm very proud of my caucus, I'm very proud of our team, because we're standing up for the independent child care providers of the province of Ontario, and we're very proud of that.

I know the government is not doing that, although they say in a couple of motions that they are actually trying to help it. That was different than the phone calls I received this weekend—I was on the phone almost all day yesterday with independent child care providers. They're not very happy with the Liberal government of Ontario, and they're certainly not happy with the Minister of Education.

We have a lot of other problems with it as well: the independent schools, the Montessori people, are not happy. If you were actually at the hearings, Mr. Speaker, it was like nine-to-one beating up the government—there were a few groups in there who supported the government. But then the minister came back a day later and said, "Oh, look at all the wonderful support we have got from the committee," and mentioned two or three examples. She didn't mention the other 40 examples, where people were very, very upset.

I want to thank a lot of people. I can't go into all their names right now, but I want to thank the people who very quickly organized against this bill, and I want to thank my members, particularly Ms. MacLeod and Ms. Martow, for their work on the bill. They did an excellent job in committee trying to get the government to listen.

I also want to thank the parliamentary assistant from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, because he actually promised us during the hearings that we would be getting minister's round tables for all people who were active stakeholders as we develop regulations. I hope that's not going to go away, and maybe the minister can clarify that at some point. But he did, in fact, mention that the minister would hold round tables on the regulations, and all the people who were interested stakeholders would have an opportunity to take part in those meetings. Now, I have never heard that happen before, but the parliamentary assistant actually promised that.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time today, and I thank my caucus members. Again, I want to say, on behalf of the PC caucus and on behalf of the children of Ontario, that there is absolutely no way we will support this bill. It is only a part bill—it's partially complete—and it does hurt a lot of young families, because they won't be able to have spaces now. It takes away a minimum of 140,000 day care spaces, and it has bad economic policies for the province of Ontario.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to third reading of Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act.

I've said all along that child care in Ontario was badly in need of modernization, and our party has advocated for action on child care. There has been a growing need for child care for decades, and there has been legislation on the books since the Day Nurseries Act was first enacted way back in 1946.

This bill repeals the Day Nurseries Act and enacts the Child Care and Early Years Act, as well as making amendments to other acts.

The need for child care, as I say, has been growing for decades, to the extent it is today, and quite literally, it's in crisis. We simply do not have enough licensed, non-profit, subsidized child care spaces to meet the needs of families in 2014.

Faced with the high cost of child care, long wait-lists for spaces—in particular, subsidized spaces—and concerns about the safety of their children, parents are worried and deeply concerned about how the patchwork system we have will meet their needs.

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While there is a lot of good stuff in this bill, I'm not quite sure it adequately addresses the fears of today's families. The most glaring problem is the fact that this Liberal government has been underfunding child care for years, and municipalities have been left to pay the costs just to maintain the services that are there. New Democrats believe that every family, no matter their income, deserves the opportunity to get high-quality child care. We believe that all children deserve programs in their early years so that they may develop in an environment that ensures their health and safety. We know that the only way to deliver that is by investing in a comprehensive, licensed, not-for-profit, affordable child care system that is accessible to all young families wherever they may live in Ontario and pays proper wages to early childhood educators and daycare providers. With the introduction of full-day kindergarten, our child care sector has become unstable, and it is hard to see how it can stabilize when it remains so desperately underfunded.

The fact is that Ontario does not have a child care system that works for all families. Let's remember that Ontario has the highest child care fees in the country. In Quebec, families pay \$152 per child regardless of their age. In Manitoba, they pay \$631 a month for infants and \$431 a month for toddlers. In Nova Scotia, they pay \$825 a month for infants and \$694 a month for toddlers. In Alberta, they pay \$900 a month for infants and \$825 a month for toddlers. Meanwhile, in Ontario, families are paying way more than that. They're paying over \$1,000 each a month per child, and it can run to as high as \$2,000 a month. Unlike other provinces such as Manitoba, Quebec and PEI, Ontario sets no maximum fees. Here, every centre and home-based child care provider is responsible for setting their own fees.

Let's also remember that these exorbitant fees are hitting families at a time in their lives when they can least afford it—a time when they're still paying off their student loans, a time when they are on the low rungs of their career ladder, a time in the early years of their mortgage, of buying their new homes.

The wait-list information shows, from my hometown of Hamilton, that there are 950 children waiting for a subsidized spot, and that's an increase of 100 just from August to September of this last year.

Speaker, there are some serious outstanding concerns regarding the accessibility and affordability of child care in Ontario.

Another major concern has been the safety of our children in child care settings, and I've raised this issue more than a number of times in this House. We put forward some amendments to this bill at the committee, and I was pleased that some of them were adopted. These included amendments mandating the appointment of child care inspectors and enshrining the dedicated enforcement unit into legislation, but the fact remains that they're only hiring six inspectors to take care of the entire province. This is when the Ministry of Education was seen to be totally inadequate in their lack of response to complaints about home-based child care in Vaughan. In the Ombudsman's report of its investigation into unlicensed child care in Ontario, it was pointed out that the ministry had failed to respond to complaints against this operator in the months leading up to the death of Eva Ravikovich. She was in their care, along with 34 other children, in a grossly illegal setting. Those serious problems have been very well documented, and we have serious concerns about the lack of enforcement and the basic care standards by this government.

As the Ombudsman found in his report, the Liberals have consistently failed to enforce the legislation and keep kids safe in child care settings, and there is still no mechanism for knowing just how many unlicensed child care providers there are in Ontario and how many children are in their care, or who those providers actually are.

As I said, a few of our amendments were successfully passed at committee but the Liberals rejected what we considered to be the most important amendments we put forward. In particular, we put forward amendments reflecting our belief that not-for-profit and public child care centres need to be the basis of our child care system. Under this Liberal government, for-profit child care spaces have gone from approximately 17% of spaces in 2001 to 25% of the spaces today.

In December 2011, the Liberals allowed the Edleu Group, Canada's first publicly traded child care corporation, to buy seven Ontario child care centres. The growth of private child care is bad for Ontario families, and it's particularly bad for families who most desperately need child care. They cater to the affluent elite. They charge high fees and create a two-tier child care system, one for the wealthy and one for the rest. These large companies see our current child care crisis as an investment oppor-

tunity, and history should warn us that the profit motive results in a lower quality of care for our children.

Way back in the 1970s, Ontario faced a major lobby campaign by the Alabama-based KinderCare—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I heard “Obama.”

Miss Monique Taylor:—the Alabama-based KinderCare with the aim of reducing staff-to-child ratios, and in the 1980s, workers at the Mini-Skool chain went on strike because of the terribly low wages and were on strike for at least five months.

Lower wages are certainly not a thing of the past. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care reports that the average wage of a child care worker is \$16 an hour. These workers are in effect providing a substantial subsidy to child care in Ontario simply by working for substandard pay. They can’t continue to do that. Low wages mean we have significant challenges for recruitment and retention of qualified, educated and experienced staff. Again, if we want to stabilize the child care sector, it cannot be done as long as wages remain this low.

This bill is far from perfect, and that situation was not helped by this government’s insistence on limiting debate and, more importantly, on limiting public input. There are few people in Ontario unaffected by this bill in some way. Even if many of them are not fully aware of it yet, they will feel that impact, and many of those people wanted to speak to it and how it would affect them and their families.

In particular, I recognize that some people have concerns about the impact of Bill 10 on independent child care providers. Those people wanted to put their case forward, and that is why we moved an amendment to the time allocation motion that would have taken the committee outside of Toronto and across Ontario for extra days of hearings. But the government voted that down. They voted it down because they always think that they know best, that they don’t need input from families, or even the experts at times.

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: A majority doesn’t give them all the best solutions; let’s just say that.

Let’s take, for example, their response last week to a submission in the Standing Committee on General Government by the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Irwin Elman. Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, proposed to extend the advocate’s mandate by giving him oversight responsibilities similar to those of the Ombudsman. Mr. Elman, a highly respected individual, pointed out that although the legislation gave him certain responsibilities, it did not give him the tools he would need to perform those duties. He pointed out that he was being denied investigative powers that are granted to the six other independent officers of the Legislature and being denied authority that was enjoyed by all other provincial children and youth advocates in the country.

He offered solutions by way of amendments to the legislation. How did the government respond to his com-

ments? Basically, they ignored him. Yes, they accepted a couple of his amendments, but when it came to the fundamental changes he felt were necessary to make this bill work, they said no. This is a very qualified individual appointed by this government and reappointed by them recently, yet they felt no need to listen to him or to take his advice.

Child care is badly in need of modernization, and although this is an extensive bill that makes many changes, it fails to address the fundamental problems faced by families when it comes to child care in Ontario. That is why our leader, Andrea Horwath, introduced an opposition day motion in this House a couple of weeks ago, on November 8. Let me read it:

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“Whereas the government of Canada has failed to provide predictable funding to develop and deliver affordable, accessible and high-quality early childhood education and child care programs in Ontario;

“Whereas families pay monthly fees of \$1,152 on average for one child care spot in Ontario, compared to \$152 per month in the province of Quebec;

“Whereas investing in high-quality child care will reduce the stress on families; benefit children’s development and future academic success; allow more parents to re-enter the workforce, retrain or go to school; reduce dependence on social assistance; reduce poverty; and will bring \$1.75 in return for every \$1 invested by our government;

“Whereas families, businesses and the economy at large will benefit from investing in our early childhood education and child care programs;

“Therefore, in the opinion of this House, this province should partner with the federal government to ensure that every parent in Ontario has access to child care at a cost of no more than \$15 a day per child.” Addressed to the Premier, to be debated November 18, 2014.

This motion responds to what we have been hearing all across Ontario, and when it comes to dealing with important issues like this, people don’t care if it’s the federal government or the provincial government that solves the problem. In fact, what they expect is for those governments to work together in their interests, and that is what this motion aims to do.

On October 14, 2014, Tom Mulcair and Canada’s New Democrats announced that a federal NDP government would create a Canadian early childhood education and child care program, with the goal that parents won’t pay more than \$15 a day per child. This program will be phased in over eight years and will create one million new child care spaces.

The motion introduced by Andrea Horwath calls on the provincial government to commit to working with the federal government, led by Tom Mulcair and Canada’s NDP, to deliver universal child care to every family that needs it and to do so at a manageable cost of \$15 per day.

We in Ontario had to lead the way and sign on to that plan. We had to let them know that we are a willing

partner. We have an opportunity to build the type of child care system our families deserve, and we must take it.

Frankly, Speaker, we know that this bill is going to pass. We know that the Liberals have a majority, because we're reminded quite often. We know that families across this province wished that they had a say when it came to this bill. Instead, the Liberals decided to time-allocate the bill, as they have all legislation that has come before us since we sat after the election. People just haven't had a chance to use their voice.

We think it's a serious problem that's happening here. It's time-allocated; there are night sittings. The Liberals are trying to jam everything through as quickly as they can.

I think that with a bill as important as our child care modernization act in this province, families and children deserve better. We need to ensure that we're putting in a safe environment for children.

The new bill that comes forward does nothing to ensure that when we drop children off in the morning, we're going to be able to pick them up safely at the end of the night.

We've seen how many deaths within seven months? We've seen four children die. That wasn't because the legislation wasn't in place; that was because this government failed to do its job. That's the end of the story. They failed to move on investigation of complaints that were made. They had one rule that they had to follow through with: making sure that providers only had five children in their care. When they had complaints that there were 27 or 30 children in completely dirty, dark, damp, unclean environments, and they didn't act on them—and we've seen children die.

They did nothing to make sure that the investigation powers are going to have enough power. They only put in place six new investigators. How are six new investigators possibly going to clean up the mess that has been left from the last legislation?

If the Liberals really wanted to do something, they could have done a lot. I think that including all people in this province, to make sure that they were there to listen, to make a good, rounded decision—we know that when we come to this House, we debate issues. Why do we debate issues? We debate issues because collective arguments come together to make good decisions. That is what our legislation, that is what this House is built on: collective agreements and collective voices.

This government thinks that they have the only voice for the entire province, so that is seriously a problem. Hopefully, after the Christmas break they'll come back with some Christmas cheer and they will find a different way to work together with all members of this House, making sure that legislation like this is done properly and that we know that our children are in a safe environment.

Thank you very much for your time, Speaker. I appreciate the fact that I was able to have my say on this bill. I know that many in this House won't have time to speak on this because, like everything else, it's time-allocated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise to debate Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act, today, and to bring to the floor of the assembly so many disaffected, disappointed and disillusioned parents and child care operators across the province, who feel that they have not only been inadequately informed about this bill and had not had the opportunity to present their views and ideas in their hometowns, but are also lamenting the fact that we will lose a number of child care spaces in this province.

So I rise today not only to lament the loss of child care spaces, but also to lament the loss of public consultation as we once knew it in the province of Ontario, where we did two things here: (1) We stood on the floor of this assembly to debate the issues of the day, which Bill 10 certainly is and child care is; and (2) we opened up our assembly, particularly our committee rooms, but we also travelled the province to engage Ontarians.

Unfortunately, this didn't happen in this situation. In fact, what has happened here is that we've seen a closure of debate, we've seen a limited amount of public consultation and, on a bill as important as our children's child care, this government refused to go into the communities who will be most affected. When I say that, I believe that suburban communities which are high-growth and rural communities that rely on independent child care will be threatened the most.

What concerns me when I talk about Bill 10 is a couple of things, predominantly the fact that the minister cannot directly answer a simple question with respect to the expected 140,000 child care spaces that will be lost in the province of Ontario. Earlier today, I had asked her in the House if she could directly tell us what her estimates were, and she wasn't able to do that, but we know from the Coalition of Independent Childcare Providers of Ontario that we are expecting to lose about 140,000 child care spaces.

If you look at the Ombudsman of Ontario's number, it's about 178,000 child care spaces that would be lost—close to, in my view, 180,000. That is quite significant, because here is the problem: In Ontario we already have among the highest child care costs in the country, and that is going to increase by another 30% to 40% as we encounter a shortage of child care spaces.

For those in urban settings, it's going to be very difficult, because we know that there will be an increased reliance on institutional care, which right now isn't every mom and dad's choice. It's also very expensive. It's an expensive option, and it is one that I think that this government wants to cater to, but the problem for the government is that, when they shut down these 140,000 to 180,000 spaces, they won't be able to keep up with capacity right away, and you'll see an increase in costs.

When you look at, for example, high-growth areas, or in rural communities, sometimes the best, most affordable and accessible child care available is by the neighbourhood down the street, the person you've known your

entire life who is prepared to look after your child. I believe that parents should have that choice, by the way, Speaker. I've spoken about this many times, that I believe that there is a parental choice that should happen with respect to child care, and that there is also a parental responsibility about making sure that your children are in safe locations.

I'm concerned, as well, that an unintended consequence of this legislation will mean changes to the pedagogy of Montessori schools, as well as private religious institutions, particularly private religious schools, whether evangelical, a Christian school or a Jewish day school. They will be impacted by this legislation. Their pedagogy may be watered down. It may be altogether changed, and I think that that's a significant concern I bring to the floor of the assembly. It's one that we heard time and time again when we spoke with the Montessori schools.

1440

But, again, I lament the fact that there wasn't sufficient public consultation. If there was, people from the independent school system would have been able to provide their advice—those from private schools, whether they were religious or not, in addition to Montessori schools. One of the associations, with respect to the Montessori schools, was left out completely, as was the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario, who are, by the way, licensed child care operators who also oppose this piece of legislation.

The government, from time to time, will talk about Bill 10 being about safety and security and quality, but if you're watering down pedagogy, how does that improve quality? If you're increasing ratios to some extent in other settings, how does that improve quality?

Speaker, I have three fundamental questions when we speak about security. This bill does not deal with increased inspectors. If you want to talk about safety and security, you must increase the inspectors. This bill does not talk about an independent registry for unlicensed child care providers, which is, by the way, what they want. If the government was worried about increasing safety and the protection of children, they would allow them to have an independent registry so that we could assess CPR, police checks—all of those sorts of things. Finally, Speaker, where are the tougher regulations? There aren't any; they're just closing down a number of spaces. They are not increasing regulations. They're not making anything more difficult. They're just closing them out entirely. If this government actually was concerned about the regulatory environment, or regulatory changes, they would have enforced the regulations in the first place. This was why we ended up having this bill to begin with.

But this has little to do with improving quality. It has little to do with improving safety. It has everything to do with moving this province toward institutionalized universal child care, which right now Quebec is wondering if they're even going to continue to do. If you look at who's doing it in the nation at the moment, it is our

neighbours to the east: Quebec. They are right now contemplating getting rid of their \$15-a-day child care.

But this is what this bill's intent is, in my view: a move toward universal child care at the expense of the parental choice, at the expense of quality of child care and at the expense of affordable child care in the province of Ontario. I do not agree with Bill 10. I will continue to stand up against this government as long as I stand in this Legislature when it pertains to child care, because I believe fundamentally they have gotten it wrong.

I'd like to read into the record—I spent the weekend, actually, speaking with a lot of independent child care operators and those who operate Montessori schools who are very concerned with the catastrophic effects that this legislation will have. I asked a number of them to send me emails. I won't get to them all, Speaker, because there were so many of them, but I want everyone at home—and I know there are hundreds, if not thousands, of parents and child care operators watching these debates today. They are wondering why there aren't more people in the assembly to listen to this, to be part of the debate. They are wondering why they were shut out of public consultations.

As I have to close, because I do know there are other members in our caucus who would like to speak, I wanted to bring the perspective of the Child Care Providers Resource Network of Ottawa-Carleton. I met with this group over a year and a half ago when I was the then education critic for the official opposition. I told them I would stand up for them, and I have followed through with that.

They talk about universal quality standards: "Bill 10 lacks sufficient emphasis on universal child care quality standards. Health, safety and welfare standards need to be established and promoted across all child care sectors and for all caregivers (affiliated with a licensed agency or not), enabling parents to confidently choose from a broad range of child care options." I agree with that.

They further say, "Parents need assurance that the standards of quality in a home setting, once established, are available in every setting, regardless of their caregiver's affiliation with a licensed agency."

Second, they talk about "Skills building and quality enhancement measures: Individual licensing or registry."

"At a minimum," they say, "Bill 10 should establish a voluntary provincial child care registry, which would serve to unite and connect child care professionals and parents to existing provincial and community supports and resources...."

"A registry could be established through the local consolidated municipal service manager.... The following requirements could be required to join:

"—Register annually with the local CMSC...."

"—Obtain a police records check."

"—Complete first aid/CPR."

"—Pass an annual safety inspection by local CSM staff."

"—Participate in annual professional development."

It seems reasonable to me, Speaker. These are people who simply want to care for other people's children.

Yet because of this legislation, two things will happen. The first is that they're likely to go out of business. The second is that they're guilty until proven innocent. The minister herself has called these people illegal. The Ombudsman never called them—he assured me in a meeting I had in my constituency office in Nepean. He never said they should be put out of business. That's why the Ombudsman is now looking into this issue, because the government is about to eliminate 140,000 child care spaces.

The Child Care Providers Resource Network also talks about accessible and affordable child care for all. That's something I have talked about in the four mandates that the residents of Nepean—Carleton sent me here. I've talked about this issue. The CCPRN says: "In its current form, Bill 10 reduces access to child care in Ontario. The bill's proposed ratios and quotas of children to be allowed in home child care effectively reduce the overall number of child care spaces available in the independent care sector, and by doing so will increase the cost of child care provided by independent professional caregivers...."

This is quite significant. With over 350,000 children currently cared for by independent child care providers, the impact is going to be widespread. There will be more children requiring child care, fewer spaces are going to be available and there will be fewer and fewer options.

Speaker, as I conclude, because I do recognize the time on the clock, I know there are a lot of parents watching today, concerned about the passage of Bill 10. I want to assure them that the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus will continue to fight this legislation. I plan on bringing forward private member's legislation to bring back choice in child care so that we can continue the debate.

I want to say thank you to those who have contacted my office or our education critic, Garfield Dunlop, asking him for his help. He has obviously been there for you. We're going to continue to do that, we're going to continue to stand up for you and we're going to try to encourage this Liberal government to understand the implications of the legislation before us. Thank you all very much, and please be assured that the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus will stand up for parental choice, parental responsibility, choice in child care, absolutely, and we're going to continue to defend you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm really pleased to join the debate today on Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act. I'm particularly happy to join the debate because I haven't really had an opportunity to debate this bill because you shut it down. It's time-allocated. I guess that is by design, of course.

This is a government that has decided that because they are now in a majority position in this Legislature, as

of the last election results, they believe they have been fully and completely exonerated from any of their previous transgressions. We can bring up eHealth, we can bring up Ornge air ambulance, we should bring up the gas plant cancellations: things that certainly left a terrible mark on the virtues of this place, on what we should be doing. Instead, it was all about what the Liberals have been doing. I would submit to the government at this point that although you may be in majority territory, it isn't because you deserve to be; it's because the PC Party, under Tim Hudak, lost. You didn't really win; the PCs lost—nine seats. That's exactly what has happened here.

Here is where you'll prove again your inability to govern in a balanced way—

Interjections.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The mike's not on for you. The member for Essex has the floor.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Before I was interrupted there, I think the debate crossed over into the realm of arrogance. I'll let you, there is nothing more arrogant than a government that time-allocates every bill and doesn't give the public the ability to comment, to provide their public insight on really important bills, none more important than the care of our children in our province. They've obviously shown their disregard for the input of the public. They know best. We're seeing it very clearly. They know best that whatever position they take on any bill on any given day will be the position that is right for the majority of the people of the province.

By goodness, Speaker, that can't be the right approach. We are hearing it quite clearly as a result on Bill 10. We know that child care in this province of Ontario is in chaos. There are far too few child care spaces for the number of children who require child care. We know that the cost of providing child care or accessing child care in this province is skyrocketing. Parents are finding it very difficult to find affordable, accessible, quality child care, and it's a position that this government and the federal government certainly have made no attempt to remedy—absolutely no movement on making sure that we have enough qualified, affordable child care spaces.

That's why I'm certainly proud to be a New Democrat. Even though we are in the third position, at some point, those good ideas come about. We've propositioned the government to take our initiative on making child care affordable by enacting a \$15-a-day threshold for public child care in this province.

Now we hear, in contrast, from the PCs that they don't believe in subsidized child care. They don't believe in any role for the state. You heard that from the member from Nepean—Carleton, unfortunately. I think she's passionate and she's accurate on some points on this bill, but when she immediately focuses on the fact that the state should have no role in providing and promoting non-profit child care, I think she's completely wrong.

I, as a parent, have used many types of child care. I've used friends and family, I've used unlicensed facilities or

unlicensed caregivers and I've used licensed caregivers. All three provide wonderful service. There's no question. But there aren't enough of them. There aren't enough, especially outside of the GTA, a geographic location and reference that the government refused to interact with. They refused to take the show on the road to speak to those people in northern Ontario or in the northwest or in the south or in central Ontario. They didn't want to hear from them. Maybe that's reflective in their electoral results. Maybe they don't want to burst the bubble of Toronto and get out and actually hear from people. I would expect that that will probably be the case for the remainder of their four-year majority government, but we will continue to listen to people in rural Ontario, in the north and in central Ontario when they say, "This government isn't doing enough. They're not providing us with the assurance that we're going to be able to access child care spaces at an affordable price."

Not only that, but this bill pays a small, cursory glance at the need for enforcement and inspection. As I understand it, we're going from a number of 54 inspectors for the over 100,000 children that are in child care in various forms around the province—so we've got, currently, 54. The bill will increase that to a grand total of around 60. That's six more inspectors. If any member of the government believes that that's going to be an adequate resource, I beg you, please stand up and tell us how six more inspectors who are already burdened by the workload, who have already told this government, "There are too many incidences for us to even track down"—

Interjection: Please don't look for more.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: "Don't look for more work for us, because we don't have the resources." If you believe that six more are going to provide you the adequate oversight and protection for our children, please stand up and let us hear from the horses' mouths.

These unlicensed child care providers that I believe are the targets—certainly there are some unscrupulous ones that we've heard of, and unfortunately they are now notorious in that they failed to provide the adequate measures of protection. They fell through the cracks of the system for one reason or another, and tragically, children were harmed and some died. But there are a large majority of unlicensed providers who do their very best each and every day, that try—that love the kids who are in their care just as the parents do, as they should. That's what you hope for when you drop off your kid at your child care provider's home or business. You hope that they love them and care for them, as they are your own, and I believe that's the case.

But this government has not acknowledged that and has made no effort to fill in that gap and to assist this transition. What you're doing is creating an incredible burden on these people who simply want to provide care. New Democrats have voiced that and would have loved to have worked towards a compromise on that front, but we hear none, we see none from a bill that's being rammed through by a government that, frankly, doesn't want to listen and thinks that, again, they've been exonerated and they can do what they see fit.

It's not going to work, Speaker. We know that. We are hearing from experts in the field that this is going to create logjams in the system, that parents will not be able to find adequate child care and that potentially, ultimately, child care safety will be compromised. It's an abdication of the responsibility of the government to actually have full and complete information and knowledge of the impact of their bill.

We'll continue to fight it, Speaker, alongside those who are advocating for compromise and measures that make sense in this regard. With a government that I guess is bent on not listening and just simply insulating themselves from the realities that exist outside of the bubble of Queen's Park, at least, and their own special interests or private interests, it's going to be a difficult task to achieve. But we certainly believe that our kids deserve our complete effort and our complete attention when it comes to ensuring that they are as safe as they can be and that parents can afford quality and accessible child care in the province of Ontario. It's the very least we can do in a modern country, in a modern province.

We have examples in Quebec—and again, my colleague from Nepean—Carleton, I believe, was mistaken when she said Quebec was trying to get rid of their \$15-a-day daycare, subsidized publicly delivered daycare. She is mistaken in the sense that, first of all, it's not \$15 a day, it's \$7 a day, and what they're discussing is whether it should be \$8 a day. And they are fighting over it because they value the fact that child care should be affordable and it's a public asset. It's a public good that allows young parents to actually enter into the workforce, knowing that there are qualified child care services provided and subsidized by the state, and that they can be relied on, and they can enter the workforce and be productive members of their communities, and hold careers. They understand the value of that system.

This government certainly has made no effort towards that type of a model. I don't think they have it in their ideological bent. You can see that they've shifted gears more towards increasing private space, for-profit spaces that are unaffordable. If you haven't noticed yet, in this province, the province of which you are governing as a majority government, people are having a hard time making ends meet. You don't get it, because you all make a huge amount of money. Each one of you makes a minimum of \$116,000 a year—

Interjection: More than that.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: More than that, because most of you are cabinet ministers and, if not, you're parliamentary secretaries, which bumps you up again. That puts you out of the realm, if you do require child care, of understanding what the difference between \$7-a-day child care is or \$15-a-day child care is or \$25- or \$35-a-day child care is. You don't get it, because you make too much money, frankly.

But for the real, average people, the middle class Ontarians out there, who are having a harder and harder time, finding it more difficult to live in your Ontario, to afford health care, to find a decent job, this means the

difference between keeping a roof over their heads or not. This means the difference between finding or accessing qualified, affordable child care or having to leverage your house, or making the payments on your car. This is the difference, and you don't seem to understand that or acknowledge it.

1500

Potentially, again, it's because you haven't burst the bubble of this place. Had we gone out and listened to people in places like Sarnia, where they've just closed a facility—just this past weekend, our leader Andrea Horwath visited a nursery, a daycare facility in Sarnia, where those parents are distraught at the fact that there will no longer be an affordable solution for their child care, and the gap that will be filled there is in the realm of private industry, to come in for profit. Sure, if you can afford it, you'll access child care, but where is this government's interest in those who absolutely cannot find it? We see no measure of work on that, not an incident where they're showing any care or concern.

Speaker, it's been a pleasure to add some debate to this. I'm sure that there are other members who would have loved to have spoken about their own ideas and what they're hearing in their communities from parents and families that see this bill as detrimental and maybe not even a half-measure towards providing security and assurance when it comes to child care.

But I can tell you that New Democrats, again, believe that the system should be safe and should be regulated, and that all children and all parents should have access to quality, affordable child care in the province of Ontario. It is the very least that we can do. We have a plan; we've put it forward. It's up to the majority government, in your wisdom, to provide that and to take that up. We hope that they do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Dufferin-Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you very much, Speaker; it's good to see you in the chair again.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak on third reading of the Child Care Modernization Act. I should start by saying that I don't think it's any big surprise that I am the mother of two—I keep them on my desk to remind me of why I'm here. I have actually used pretty much all forms of child care. When our first son was born, I was back to work within six months, and when our daughter was born I was actually back to work within a month, so I have used in-home daycare. My children and I, and my husband, still fondly talk and keep in touch with that dear friend. She's an important part of my children's development at a very critical stage.

I've used municipally run child care. Dufferin county's Jean Hamlyn Day Care Centre has an incredible staff of very caring, very giving individuals who really went above and beyond.

Finally, I've used private operators. Sandbox Tech has operated in my riding for 20-plus years. The staff were unbelievable, and Debbie, the owner/manager/operator, really understood the needs of the children in her care and provided that.

So, depending on the age of the children, their development and their needs, I've pretty much used it all. That is one of the reasons why I very much wanted to participate in the Bill 10 debate: because what I have noticed with Bill 10 is that this bill is being fast-tracked from the get-go. My Progressive Conservative Party colleagues have continually warned this government about fast-tracking what is essentially an omnibus bill.

This bill has far-reaching implications, and it will hamper the already challenged child care system in our province. Even in my own riding of Dufferin-Caledon, there are a number of private daycare operators who have reached out to me and tried to explain and advocate on why they have concerns with Bill 10 and how it's going to implicate them and their business.

Unfortunately, it's too late for us to resolve these with any amendments, because, of course, in third reading, if we're not in Committee of the Whole, we can't bring forward amendments on Bill 10. I want to stress that fact: that my party, especially my colleague from Simcoe North, has asked this government to hold province-wide public hearings when this bill was at committee. We didn't do that, and I think that we did a real disservice to the people of Ontario and to the individuals who work in the industry and could have actually brought forward some very positive suggestions on how to, yes, improve the child care options that are currently available in Ontario but also ensure that the good operators, the individuals who are doing a positive thing, can continue. Of course, we didn't get that. This government brought forward a time allocation motion ending second reading debate after a mere six hours was spent discussing the issues with Bill 10. Now this government has pushed it through committee, again without proper consultation.

I want to stress the importance of public consultation. We need to open up the doors of Queen's Park, open up the committee and actually hear from the people impacted. Unfortunately, this government is acting like they don't care about that important and vital process. This government has decided to push through this legislation as fast as possible without really taking into consideration whom it will impact.

As my party has consistently warned, this bill will affect 70,000 child care providers and roughly 350,000 Ontarians. It will limit the number of available spaces for care for children less than two years of age and will make child care more expensive. Parents will face hikes of 30% to 40% in child care costs to make up for the shortfall in income to providers. Daycare providers will lose an average of \$12,000 to \$20,000 of family income per year through the involuntary reduction of spaces or by being coerced to work for a licensed agency. In addition, due to the potential for being fined up to \$100,000, many providers will simply go underground in order to continue to support their families. This, of course, will result in zero oversight. In addition, many small daycare providers would be shut down, which will deprive parents of a place for their child to be looked after.

I think this particularly impacts the smaller communities and the rural communities. When you live in a rural

subdivision that has 40 homes, there may be one at-home child care provider in that community. If Bill 10 shuts down those providers, then we're actually making it more challenging for those individuals who are living in those small urban centres and rural centres.

It's important to talk and remind people that 80% of the child care that is currently on offer in Ontario is actually unlicensed, not unlawful, okay? We are throwing around this word, "unlawful," and it's a disservice to the people who have been providing excellent care.

This bill's intention is to foster the learning, development, health and well-being of children and to enhance their safety, but in fact, it does the exact opposite. We actually can't say whether this bill will improve child safety. If we're trying to improve child care in Ontario, then we should be trying to reduce the cost of child care for families and make sure that options are available.

I want to reiterate the fact that this government has decided to not hold proper public consultations so that concerns like the ones I've mentioned can be addressed. I want to mention again that my fellow Progressive Conservative colleagues and I have been very clear from the beginning that there should be open and accessible public consultation on Bill 10. I understand the impact of Bill 10, and we've advocated that the committee have public hearings across the province and that the committee hearings be available live on the Internet. Once again, I'd like to stress that this government has decided to do the complete opposite.

I've receive numerous complaints from concerned individuals and groups. I'd like to take the rest of my time to read out their concerns.

One individual emailed me, stating, "As a parent of a five-year-old child now attending a private Montessori institution, I would like to state that I disagree with the aspects of proposed Bill 10 that affect my choice of alternative education. I believe a healthy education system provides alternatives to the public education system. Our child did spend two months in a public school full-day kindergarten program. However, the class size of 26 four-year-olds and five-year-olds made this an untenable situation for our child. We decided to move our child to a private Montessori school as her best education option at this time. I disagree with any bill that would change our ability to make this choice at a reasonable cost."

Another individual emailed me, saying, "The Liberal government has gone too far with this bill. The ministry has never contacted or issued notice of such a bill to private schools." I will have to paraphrase the rest so as not to mention names. The rest goes to say that this is the way that the former Premier ran the province. What a shame. It seems that this current Premier is the same type of leader.

1510

There are many more examples. Basically, we allow people to make a decision about where their children can go to school—private school or publicly funded through a municipality—yet now we're putting all these param-

eters on it that essentially are shutting down those options. So which is it? Are we going to allow parents to have an active participatory role in where their children need to be, depending on their development and their education and their societal needs, or are we going to arbitrarily say, "Premier Dad and Premier Mom are in charge, and we're just going to have the children and then turn over all future responsibilities?"

I know that's not the Ontario I want to live in. Those were not my expectations when I chose to become a parent, and I don't think that's where we want to go with Bill 10. I will close with that. Thank you for allowing me to participate in the third reading debate. As I said from the beginning, it's unfortunate that in a bill where we could have actually made some positive changes, instead we're ramming it through.

Here's my prediction, for what it's worth: In three or four years, we will be back in this Legislature trying to fix what Bill 10 is about to do, and it will be doubly hard, because then we have operators who have walked away and said, "I'm not doing this anymore. Government is too intrusive, too involved, and I can't make a living at it."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm glad that I can bring my voice to this debate, on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin, on Bill 10, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act.

I have a very short period of time to give my comments, so I want to talk to you in regard to the personal situation that a colleague of mine has. You know what? She is a fantastic mother of a wonderful, young, vibrant little boy. He is so well mannered. She has done such a wonderful job. Just for the sake of putting a name, let's say her name is Claire. I've seen this young woman blossom and use every tool in her war chest in making the right decisions so that her son has all that he needs and all that he requires in his everyday life.

The other thing is that I'm very thankful that this lady actually has a very good job that provides her with a decent wage. I do know her employer, and he's apparently a decent person as well, and she's very fortunate to work in a union environment where she is provided with a good salary and good benefits. But you know what? She struggles to make ends meet because over half of her paycheque is going towards child care. Sometimes I have an opportunity to sit down with her and have a coffee, to sit down and understand some of the challenges that she, as a young mother, faces every single day, every single payday, every single month, because she looks at the hydro bill, she looks at the payments that have to come out at the end of the month—her car and insurance, and rent—and it's tough as heck for her making that decision.

So making the true, right decision of having real affordable child care is something that she is so much looking forward to from her government. She is so much wanting to move on that and have her views respected and to recognize herself in this government's policies, but it's not happening, and she continues to be frustrated.

You know what? I'll sit down with her at every opportunity that I have, and I will continue having that coffee with her until we get something done for her.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to Bill 10, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, the Education Act and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts.

Just to provide a little background, Mr. Speaker, my wife and I have four kids. They're all grown now, but we made use primarily of what was described as being 80% of child care, which is unlicensed; as the member from, I believe, Nepean–Carleton said, unlicensed, not unlawful, child care. The results were very good, and we were very satisfied with the choice we had.

I'm concerned—as our critic the member for Simcoe North, who has done a great job, has said—that there may be as many as 140,000 spots that are unavailable if this bill passes, that we'll lose 140,000 spots. That could have the effect, as the member from Dufferin–Caledon said, of driving child care costs up some 30% to 40%. That is certainly a big concern.

In the limited amount of time I have to speak to this bill, I want to talk about the effect on independent schools. Last April, when Bill 143, which was a similar bill, was being debated in the spring session, I was called up by Muskoka Montessori School principal Timo Bijl, and invited to spend a morning in their class for very young children there, what they call Casa.

I took them up on the opportunity and spent a morning sitting quietly in a little chair in the midst of the Casa, just to experience and see what it was like. There are younger kids in the Casa—a range of about three or four years, I think—and the older kids sort of look out for the younger kids, to a certain extent.

I can tell you that I was really impressed. I would, without any qualm, send my kids at any age to that school, and I think they would have done very well from it. I was very impressed with all the life skills they try to teach—to be polite, to look you in the eye—and skills like ironing and various things we all need to know how to do.

I think it would be a shame if that was lost. It's a choice for families that want to make use of it, and it's a good choice. I could certainly see my daughter Abigail, her husband, Mike, our one grandchild, Beatrice, and another one on the way—I'm sure that when they return from Shanghai, that would be the sort of school they would love to be able to take advantage of. I just think it would be too bad if this bill negatively affects that choice.

I did receive a number of letters from the school, after being there, and in the limited time I have available, I'd like to get a couple of them on the record.

This was written to me back in the spring, and it says:

“Dear Mr. Miller,

“This is a letter from three Muskoka Montessori ... kids. Our names are Ava, Jamie, and Keenan. We are from upper elementary, which is grade 4, 5 and 6 in one class. We are writing this letter to discuss Bill 143. If this bill does go through, the Montessori schools around Ontario will be just the same as public schools, and they might even shut down the Montessori schools.

“This will affect the Casa kids. The Casa is preschool and kindergarten. Casa means ‘children’s house.’ We want to keep Casa the same because all the Casa kids enjoy Casa. The kids get reading buddies. They get individual lessons or lessons in a small group. They learn manners and household chores. They learn to read. They use materials to learn. They learn subtraction, addition and sometimes easy multiplication. They learn to use patience, and they learn how to prepare their own snack and how to eat with their mouths closed. They learn to clean up after themselves. They have a washroom and library in class. They learn to buckle, zip, braid and many more fasteners. They have circle, which is time to read, sing and share their thoughts. They raise their hands quietly and patiently when the teacher calls them. They have quiet and kind teachers. They learn cursive. They pick their own work and materials. They can also choose their own spots around the room. These are some of the reasons we think that Bill 143 should not go on.”

The signatures of many of the kids are on that letter.

I have many letters, but I'll get through one or two more.

Another one:

“Dear Mr. Miller,

“If this bill is approved, some of the cool things that we do at this school will be gone, or the school will be shut down.

“This Bill 143 is all because of safety. We disagree. This letter is to explain that this school is perfectly safe. Here are the reasons:

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“(1) The teachers are always looking out for us. This means that the teachers help to prevent bullying in the school and in the playground, which helps create a peaceful environment, which keeps the students safe.

“(2) We all keep a healthy environment in our school. We all respect each other's allergies, which keeps people happy and healthy. We always wash our hands before we cook, after we go to the washroom etc.

“(3) Our actions keep us safe. We carefully plan our fire drills and complete them in an orderly manner and make sure no one is left behind. We don't climb trees so that we don't get hurt. We have fences to keep our playground perimeter secure. And we are always ready to help in case of an accident.

“Yes, our school is safe and we hope you'll help decline Bill 143.” It's signed by a number of the students.

And a very nice letter written in cursive:

“Dear Mr. Miller,

“Thank you for coming to our school to learn about why it is such a special place for us. We think we are

getting a great education here. We love our hamster named Teddy. We love our French lessons. We love the work we learn. We love the materials we have so we can learn cool things like decimals. We like how we can learn cursive. We love how we can choose our spots and move around our classroom. We love math and doing big huge questions. We love long division. We like how we have thousands of books. We love our big projects like our geography fair. This year we are learning about Australia and Oceania. We love our teachers. They are very kind and they teach us lots of cool stuff. They teach us awesome lessons with materials and they read us stories. Our Great Lessons are fun and they teach us about cool stuff like the universe and history. We learn how people evolved on Earth. We love language and we know all the parts of speech. We love learning Roman numerals. We put on plays.

"If we had to learn in the same way as all the public schools, we would not be able to have all our wonderful Montessori lessons. We love our school!" It's signed by the lower elementary class, grades 1 to 3.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 10 in the limited time that I had available.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 5, 2014, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Sandals has moved third reading of Bill 10. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have received an official deferral notice from the chief government whip. The vote will take place tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

BETTER BUSINESS CLIMATE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT À INSTAURER UN CLIMAT PLUS PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 7, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 27, 2014, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Duguid has moved second reading of Bill 7. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that I've received a deferral notice on this vote from the chief government whip. It will be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When this House last debated Bill 35, we had heard from the member from Oshawa and the member for Niagara Falls in combined remarks.

Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It has been so long.

For a government that has decided they need to have an evening session, I find it more than passing strange that we're now into our second debate on a piece of legislation, a government bill, and yet the government members have chosen not to participate. If they are interested in defending their proposed legislation, you would think it would be incumbent upon them to actually participate in the debate. The idea of debate is a back-and-forth and switching of ideas, and when the government side chooses not to participate in the debate, it begs the question whether in fact they are going through the motions.

Having said that, we are here to debate Bill 35, Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act—again, something that I would think the government would be interested in, in ensuring the safety of all Ontario residents.

Bill 35 will repeal the Public Works Protection Act. Bill 35 will amend the Police Services Act. It will also amend the Police Services Act to address court security.

The proposed changes would ensure court security guards have the powers to require all those entering a courthouse to show identification and provide a reason for being there; to subject them to a search; and, if deemed necessary, would allow security officers to search the vehicle they arrived in without a warrant.

Anyone refusing to identify themselves or failing to leave on demand would face fines of up to \$2,000 or imprisonment for up to 60 days.

Besides amending the Police Services Act, Bill 35 will also enact the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act. This provides for the appointment of security personnel as peace officers and sets out security regulations for electricity generating and nuclear facilities that are similar to those set out for courthouses.

Speaker, I'd first like to discuss why Bill 35 came forward in the first place. This bill first came about in 2012 as a result of the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto. This government declared the G20 zone a public work, as stipulated in regulation 233/10 of the Public Works Protection Act.

Prior to the G20 summit, there were media reports circulating that the police were granted special powers to arrest individuals who were up to five metres on either side of the security fence of the G20 zone. There was widespread uncertainty before and during the G20 summit about exactly what the special powers to arrest were.

Speaker, it was only after the summit was over that the government publicly disclosed that the police were never granted powers to arrest individuals who were five metres outside of the designated public work zone.

There were many people who believed that this government had deliberately misled the public, to scare off protestors from occupying the area surrounding the G20 zone.

This government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Dufferin—Caledon to withdraw that remark.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I withdraw, Speaker.

As we all know with the gas plant scandal, eHealth, Ornge and many others, this government never likes to tell the full story. Even with this province's finances, this government likes to spin the truth so it favours them. So we should expect nothing less.

In April 2011, an independent inquiry led by Ontario's former Chief Justice, Roy McMurtry, found the Public Works Protection Act to be "beyond troubling" and recommended that it be repealed. Bill 35 addresses the recommendations made by former Chief Justice McMurtry as a result of the G20. It is unfortunate that this has taken so long to get to this point, to replace these archaic powers.

Bill 35 was first brought forward in February 2012. Several amendments were made after the bill was reviewed by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, but the bill died on the order paper.

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It was reintroduced in April 2013, but again died on the order paper when this government called the spring

election. Now we have its third iteration. Hopefully, the third time will be a charm for Bill 35.

Speaker, I want to spend the rest of my time discussing the implications of this bill. Bill 35 would repeal, as I said, the Public Works Protection Act. I would like to take a moment discussing the Public Works Protection Act. The Public Works Protection Act came about during World War II, actually, to protect the province's public works from war-time enemies. It also seeks to clarify security measures dealing with courthouses, electricity generating facilities and nuclear facilities. These are all considered public works and are protected under the act.

The circumstances for such legislation do not really exist in present-day Ontario. As such, we must ask why we would need to have such legislation in present-day Ontario. Ontario and Canada are not in a global war, like the one that existed when this law was initially created. The situation of the past does not exist in present-day Ontario. It's also important to mention that the Public Works Protection Act was rarely, if ever, amended. Former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry's report provided a detailed history of the Public Works Protection Act. In the report, McMurtry stated, as the Public Works Protection Act "was enacted in 1939 as an emergency wartime statute, it is perhaps not surprising that it is relied upon today in only limited circumstances."

I want to highlight how an archaic piece of legislation that was specifically created as an emergency wartime response has been used and abused in present-day Ontario. On June 3, 2010, regulation 233/10 was issued under the Public Works Protection Act. The regulation had the effect of designating areas of the downtown core of Toronto as public works. The regulation was passed, of course, in secret without being disclosed to any of us in this chamber and was certainly not debated in this chamber. I want to stress how this wartime legislation was used or abused by the Liberals in 2010 during peacetime.

The act's key provision in section 3, which states that a guard appointed under the act or a police officer may "require any person entering or attempting to enter any public work or any approach thereto to furnish his or her name and address, to identify himself or herself and to state the purpose for which he or she desires to enter the public work." In addition to these identification requirements, section 3 permits a warrantless search of any person entering or attempting to enter a public work, as well as any vehicle. If there is a refusal to comply with a direction made under the act, that person may be subject to a fine of up to \$500 and imprisonment of up to two months. This is the section of the act that gave police the ability to detain people without any crime taking place.

The definition of "public work" in section 1 of the act is very broad and includes "any railway, canal, highway, bridge, power works" and "any provincial and any municipal public building." It also includes "any other building, place or work designated a public work." As a result, a large portion of downtown Toronto was designated as a public work during the summit. It is sad that this

government did not publicly disclose this regulation when it had such broad-sweeping reach to all those who were here during the summit. This government seems to believe that openness and transparency is only appropriate when they deem it necessary. What is also unfortunate is that this government did not clarify the application of the law to police, which resulted in mass arrests.

A *Globe and Mail* article from last June reported: "Police, however, misinterpreted the law to mean they could stop, search and arrest anyone who came within five metres of the outside of the fence. Officers even cited the law blocks away from the summit site as justification for arbitrarily detaining and searching people. The province allowed this misunderstanding to continue throughout the summit, which saw the largest mass arrests in Canadian history."

It's quite disturbing to hear it. This government allowed the largest mass arrests in Canada's history to occur, and the most damning part is it occurred during peacetime. I just want to stress the fact that this government allowed this confusion to continue. The government only cared about themselves and protecting themselves from criticism for not clarifying the law. Instead of admitting what they had done, the Liberals stayed quiet and allowed innocent people to be detained. Ontario's Ombudsman summed it up best when he said, "Responsible protesters and civil rights groups who took the trouble to educate themselves about their rights prior to the G20 had no way of knowing they were" literally "walking into a trap."

Speaker, we cannot continue down this road the government is taking us on. If this government wants to tout themselves as advocates for government transparency and openness, then incidents like this should not occur. A regulation like this should have never come into place without public disclosure and a proper debate. If this government did the right thing, then we wouldn't even be here right now discussing the disturbing events that took place in 2010.

I'd like to spend a moment discussing the criticism levied by Ontario's Ombudsman. In his report, titled *Caught in the Act*, Ombudsman André Marin, said, "Regulation 233/10, passed to enhance security during the G20 summit, should never have been enacted.... Specifically, the passage of the regulation triggered the extravagant police authority found in the Public Works Protection Act, including the power to arbitrarily arrest and detain people and to engage in unreasonable searches and seizures.... The Public Works Protection Act under which it was proclaimed authorizes regulations to be created to protect infrastructure, not to provide security to people during events. Regulation 233/10 was therefore probably invalid for having exceeded the authority of the enactment under which it was passed. These problems should have been apparent.... The decision of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to sponsor the regulation was unreasonable." That, of course, came from André Marin.

This decision was made behind closed doors by this government. This is the type of decision that we have

come to expect under regulations. Decisions like this threaten our democratic process. There was no discussion with stakeholders, locals or anyone for that matter who had a concern with this destructive regulation. Even if this regulation was brought forward to the Legislature to be debated by all of us, which it wasn't, that would have been the minimum this government could have done. Instead, they chose to do nothing and decided to create it behind closed doors and irresponsibly allowed the regulation to go unnoticed.

We are all here to protect the people of Ontario and to put their interests ahead of our own. We are not doing our job properly when we are allowing regulations like this to exist and to not be debated.

Now we have Bill 35 before us. Speaker, I have applauded this government—I will applaud this government—for trying to repeal this archaic legislation that they used against the public. As we've seen, old and publicly overlooked legislation can be used as a tool by governments to suppress people's fundamental rights and freedom. It's worth mentioning again that Bill 35 was first brought forward to us as Bill 34 in 2012. Bill 34 was the Liberal government's first attempt to make amends after they oversaw the largest mass arrests in Canadian history. While it incorporated many of the recommendations of the McMurtry report, there were still many issues with it that were raised by various stakeholders such as the Criminal Lawyers' Association, the County and District Law Presidents' Association and the Ontario Bar Association.

No bill is ever perfect in its first iteration. This government actually took the criticisms into consideration when drafting Bill 51 and subsequently today, here, Bill 35. I only wish they could have done the same for many other bills this government brings forward that are far from perfect and may have negative and, to be fair, unintended consequences.

Just look at what this government has done with Bill 10, which earlier today I was speaking on. This government may have all the right intentions, but Bill 10 will cause many parents across the province to be left to the wayside by depriving them of a place for their children to be looked after.

As I mentioned, there were a considerable number of concerns that stakeholders had with Bill 34. Our party carefully considered the recommendations of experts and concerned associations and introduced several amendments to strengthen the bill. They were carried at standing committee and incorporated into Bill 34, and I am happy to see that the government has put them into the newest iteration, Bill 35.

Now, Speaker, these changes were all adopted and put into the reintroduced Bill 51 of the last session earlier this year. But it died on the order paper when this government called a snap election this spring.

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So here we are with Bill 35 before us. It's an attempt by the government to rectify a problem that never should have happened in the first place. Those who made the

decision to put in place regulation 233/10 made a clear and deliberate choice. They decided to impose it secretly, and at no point did they feel like they had a responsibility to the people of Ontario to forewarn them of such a damning law, or to at least clarify the powers given to the police at the time.

This government has always needed to rectify problems that they created in the first place, but that is not what government should be about. We shouldn't be creating problems and then trying to fix them later on. We are here to solve problems, not to create them, but this government does not know how to do it. It may very well be their intention to solve problems, but they end up creating a bigger mess than the problem they were trying to fix in the first place.

Speaker, that is why we are here now debating Bill 35: to fix a problem that shouldn't have existed in the first place. In addition, this is why this government brought forward Bill 8, which is their way of addressing their lack of a history of transparency and openness. This government has one of the worst records of transparency and openness, and that is part of the reason why we have Bill 35 before us.

Time and time again we hear of scandals that have plagued this Liberal government since 2003, so I just find it odd that this government is trying to promote themselves as activists of transparency and accountability but don't seem interested in following it themselves. When this government talks about improving and promoting transparency and accountability, we must be suspect of them.

Speaker, I'm happy to see Bill 35 come about, and I will be supporting it, but that does not mean that we forget this government's history of selfishness and lack of respect for the people of Ontario with this regulation. This bill is a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, the events of the 2010 G20 summit took place, and we will always remember them. I hope for their sake that this government will start being responsible and put in place good laws that promote and protect our society, not damage it. Our forefathers worked so hard to create a society that we've come to love and care for; we should not tarnish it with terrible decisions like the one made in 2010.

I've spoken a lot about the regulatory change. For people who are listening to this debate, to put this in context, a regulatory change can come about with three people. They all have to be members of cabinet. There does not have to be a cabinet discussion when a regulatory change is being proposed or signed off. Of course, because it only involves three people, it can happen very quickly.

What we had, whether it was intended or unintended—what we're dealing with with Bill 35 is the unintended consequences of three people thinking that they knew better—they knew best—than the 107 members of the elected chamber and the people of Ontario. They chose to make the regulation, pass the regulation, put it in place, and then, most disturbing of all, were not

willing to publicly explain it, defend it and ensure that people who wanted to legally, with every right and intention, participate in the G20 through education, demonstrations—call it what you may, but they have a legal right to participate in that. The government chose not to ensure that they understood what the regulatory change meant to them and their freedoms.

I'd just like to finish my time with a passage from the Ombudsman's report: "All of this makes for a sorry legacy. The value in hosting international summits is that it permits the host nation to primp and pose before the eyes of the world. Ordinarily Ontario and Canada could proudly showcase the majesty of a free and democratic society. The legacy of the passage and administration of regulation 233/10 is that we failed to do that well."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now we'll move to questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege and an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

The member from Dufferin-Caledon spoke very, very well on issues in regard to the government not telling the whole story. I think I agree with some of what she's saying, and I think that's the first step that this government needs to do: to take responsibility for what happened at the G20. There's a big reason why they need to take responsibility. That accountability and owning up to the decisions that were made, good or bad—and there were a lot of bad decisions that were made—is the first step to initializing back the trust and the accountability that so many are looking for in this government, making sure that our judicial system and our facilities are very well taken care of and that these individuals have all the rights and privileges that they are enshrined with, not just as Ontario citizens but as Canadian citizens, and that they have the ability to uphold.

Now, let's not kid ourselves. Repealing the Public Works Protection Act is an absolute must that we need to do. One of the very important things is that replacing this with legislation that is actually flawed is not something that we here in the NDP are going to be wanting to pursue. We need to learn from what has happened and learn from the errors that were there, but let's not repeat them over again by introducing another piece of flawed legislation.

Again, I thank the member from Dufferin-Caledon for bringing her comments, and I will sit here for the rest of the afternoon listening to the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member from Dufferin-Caledon for her remarks.

Her remarks sort of speak to two different directions, one in which you hear so clearly her bemoaning how long it has taken for this legislation that I think we all agree needs to be replaced. She bemoans the fact that it was introduced in 2012 following the Marin and McMurtry reports, but then goes as a result of dying on

the order paper. But she doesn't take responsibility for the fact that the members opposite actually held a majority in the House but they saw fit not to support the direction of the government, so we had to call the election that did delay this piece of legislation.

I am, however, encouraged that her remarks portend a very positive future for this piece of legislation. It is an important direction for our government to take, and I will have a chance and hope to speak at greater length about why I believe this is a right bill.

She notes, quite correctly, that we did listen very carefully during committee, and notwithstanding the way the House divided last time, we incorporated some amendments at the time, in the last session of the Legislature, and we've re-incorporated them in the bill that's back in front of us today. The member correctly identifies that we were listening, that there were changes, and so we're now in a situation where I believe that we should probably just unanimously consent and go right to third reading. I can't imagine the members opposite being concerned about time limitations on this bill. Let's move it forward as quickly as possible, because it is the right thing to do, and there will be—

Mr. John Yakabuski: So you're not speaking to it, or you are speaking to it?

Mr. Arthur Potts: We'll be speaking to it. We'll all be speaking to it in good time. But in the 20 seconds left to me, I just want to say—I hear about this revisionist history, which I hope to be able to expand on—that this legislation has been around since the Second World War. It's been around when the parties of every member in the House opposite were in power, and they didn't see to repeal it then. We're taking that action because it's the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's an honour to stand in this House and address the comments of the member from Dufferin—Caledon.

It's interesting to me when I see this bill—and I certainly agree with some of the changes that are going to be made with the bill. I think it needed to be changed. We all saw the fiasco of the G20 summit, what happened here in town, and certainly we know that who was in responsible for a lot of it was this current government.

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If I was a police officer in Ontario—and some of these police officers do it voluntarily when they come to these types of events; sometimes they make a little extra money, but mostly it's for their interest in the event—I would question my sanity if I got involved in something with this government again, because of what has happened in the past. We've seen the way they have run this government for the past, I think, 12 years: the money they've spent, the money they've wasted, all the scandals they went through. And then they pull this stunt at the G20, with mass arrests and very few people charged out of it. I certainly think the bill has to be changed—this should have been brought forward a long time ago.

However, like I say, why would I want to be a security person in this province, working for this government, when these things happen? They have an issue with running the government. They certainly can't run security in this province.

I do applaud what the security officials did under the limitations they had. They did the best job they thought they could. Certainly they shouldn't be criticized for what happened under this government's leadership.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always an honour to stand on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Windsor—Tecumseh to speak to an issue about which my friend from Beaches—East York says why, when other governments were in power, didn't they repeal the bill and improve on the bill? The easy answer, of course, is that it wasn't abused during the time when other parties were in power; it was abused during the McGuinty years, during the G20, and you guys are finally getting to it. You say, "We would have had it there if it wasn't for the election." I can count six members on the backbench today, yourself included, who wouldn't be—

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, you're happy we had an election, because you wouldn't be here otherwise.

It's interesting that here we are trying to improve something, and you should be thankful that the opposition—if you're listening to the opposition, we're trying to work together to improve something that needs fixing, and hasn't been fixed in a while.

I wasn't at the G20. I watched it on television. I hearkened back to when we had a similar demonstration, but much smaller in size, in Windsor, years ago—so long ago that my friend Herb Gray was still a very powerful federal Liberal cabinet minister. We had the demonstration. We had the pepper spray. I was still reporting, lugging around a TV camera as a video journalist, being pepper-sprayed—all very exciting. But we didn't kettle. We didn't arrest hundreds and hundreds of citizens who were only there to see what was going on, innocent civilians who had their civil rights trampled on.

That's what we want to improve: We want to make sure it doesn't happen again. We want to work with you on that to improve the bill. You should be saying, "Let's talk about it some more and get the best bill we can out of it." That's what you should be saying.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Dufferin—Caledon for her reply.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the members from Algoma—Manitoulin, Beaches—East York, Perth—Wellington and Windsor—Tecumseh.

As I said, I do intend to support Bill 35. It doesn't mean it's flawless. It doesn't mean it can't be improved. I've spoken many times in this chamber about my concerns with regulations. I've spoken about why I am

concerned with how regulations magically appear in this place, and Bill 35 is no exception.

Section 142: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations governing the exercise of the powers conferred by section 138, including,

"(a) regulations imposing restrictions, limitations and conditions on the exercise of those powers;...

"(2) A regulation made under subsection (1) may be general or particular in its application."

There is still the need for oversight, and that oversight must go beyond three members who happen to be part of a cabinet and want to change a regulation and can do so with less than a day's notice. So we all still have a responsibility to be vigilant, if Bill 35 does actually pass in its current iteration and turns into law, because there are still opportunities for it to be abused. We need to make sure, when those regulations are happening, when those changes are occurring, that first, the cabinet and the government in power notifies the public, and second, we have an opportunity as opposition members and members of the public to participate in what changes they are intending to make from a regulatory standpoint.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate. I'm pleased to recognize the member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you for the opportunity to join my honourable colleagues in the debate on Bill 35, the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014. This is my first opportunity to speak to this particular bill, although I have been reminded by several of my colleagues that earlier versions of this bill were before the Legislature under consequent sessions when I did not yet hold a seat in this chamber.

I'd like to thank the member from Dufferin-Caledon for her comments. She spoke to the history of the Public Works Protection Act, and I found that there was a lot of useful information in the comments that she shared.

First and foremost, this bill repeals the Public Works Protection Act. It has been stated several times throughout the debates of this bill at second reading that the PWPA is an outdated law that gives sweeping powers to the government. On this, I agree with those who have risen before me, and I too believe that repealing the PWPA is a good thing. It needs to be done, and I'm satisfied that the bill before the Legislature does this. However, I do think it's important to be mindful of what we're replacing it with. If that was all that this bill did—if it only repealed the PWPA—I would have much less to say as I stand before you today. However, this is not the case. I want to assure you that New Democrats are committed to studying and analyzing every aspect of this bill to ensure that the public, our constituents, are informed of all the aspects of this bill so that we can debate the nuances of the bill and know that the public will have access to these debates.

Ensuring that citizens in Ontario see democracy in action and, by extension, the justice system in action is foundational to the functioning of this province, a point I will return to throughout my remarks this afternoon.

Before I enter into a debate on the particulars of this bill, I think it's worthwhile to call attention once more to the history of the PWPA, the piece of legislation that this bill repeals and, to some extent, replaces. The Public Works Protection Act was enacted at the onset of the Second World War and provided sweeping powers to the government to protect vital infrastructure projects. While this type of legislation may have seemed reasonable at the time to protect Ontario against possible enemy saboteurs, its usefulness in 2014 is questionable.

What's worse is that the sweeping powers outlined in the legislation make it prone to government abuse. We saw this type of abuse during the mass arrests of protesters and bystanders at the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto. That's when this Liberal government, the very government touting the repeal of the PWPA today, used that act to pass sweeping reforms in the days leading up to the summit. These reforms severely limited the civil liberties of individuals in the streets of Toronto. The result was that over 1,000 people, including protesters, sympathizers and bystanders, were rounded up and kept in steel pens for the duration of the summit. There were over 20,000 police officers patrolling the street. There is no way to undo this. There is no easy remedy to ensure that those who had their civil liberties stripped away can ever have their faith in our justice system restored. The only thing we can do is make certain that nothing like this happens again. This is something that I hope we can achieve.

I don't want to dwell on the events of the G20 summit too much, but this context is important to remember as the debate on Bill 35 advances. The PWPA is prone to abuse and should be removed. It was this government that abused this legislation, which is why I will take every opportunity to scrutinize the bill before us today in order to ensure that proper checks and balances exist on any laws that will be enforced and administered by this government.

As I stated at the outset, if the bill simply repealed the PWPA, I'd be making very different comments before this chamber.

I should clarify that I do not take issue with the fact that this bill goes further than simply just repealing the PWPA, but I feel that the amendments to the Police Services Act warrant further examination and further questions—questions I hope will be answered throughout the course of the debate on this bill.

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A second function of the legislation we are debating today is to amend the Police Services Act with respect to courts, and its third function is to enact security for electricity generating facilities and nuclear facilities. I'm going to focus most of my time and attention on speaking to the elements of the bill that deal with courts.

As my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton put so eloquently during his debate on the bill last month, we expect a different level of openness and accessibility to our courts as they compare to public infrastructure and facilities like electricity generating stations.

But before I get ahead of myself, I will say a few words on the infrastructure components of this bill. This bill provides some important clarification on what categories of infrastructure will be governed by this bill when compared to the outdated Public Works Protection Act, which gave sweeping powers to the government and could manifest in a number of applications.

If enacted, this bill would ensure that if the government wanted to extend the application of this legislation to facilities that are not currently specified, an amendment to the act would be required rather than simply a regulatory change. This is important because an amendment to the act requires it to be debated publicly and passed in this chamber—a welcome measure, I'm sure.

However, given what we've seen from this government so far, with their excessive use of time allocation to limit debate among democratically elected officials, I'm not confident that any debate on an amendment tabled by this government would be free from similar abuses of our Legislature. They have already moved to time allocation six times this session. I wonder if we will see this number balloon to as high as 70 or 80, which is more in the range we expect from federal Conservatives in their use of time allocation to force closure on debates.

Moving to the provisions of this bill as they relate to courthouses, it's important to reiterate that we have a different threshold for the accessibility of courthouses as compared to infrastructure projects—we hold them to a different standard. My New Democratic colleagues have stated throughout this debate that people need open access to courthouses because they need to see that justice is being done. This is foundational for our system of justice, and public access to our courthouses is an important check and balance of this system.

As I understand it, this bill outlines various criteria for entering a courthouse. A person may be subject to a warrantless search upon entering. I've been told that this person would be required to identify themselves before entering a courthouse and be subject to a search. The purpose of this, we are told, is to assess whether or not they are a security risk. What are the constraints placed on what can be asked to assess if someone is a security risk? Would political affiliation be considered appropriate?

If someone shows up to a courthouse and walks through the door, I believe they are acting on their intention to enter the courthouse. An overly burdensome process of warrantless search and seizure of their person and vehicle or the vehicle that they arrived at the courthouse in is, in fact, a barrier to their original intention of entering the courthouse and restricts the openness of our courthouses.

We must ensure that the proper balance is struck between reducing barriers to entering courthouses and ensuring that these institutions are protected from threats, and that the protections in place are proactive. I do believe that some form of protection ought to be in place, but we must also acknowledge that this can manifest in many ways. For instance, Manitoba has a very progres-

sive legislative regime governing access to courthouses. In that province, they focus on screening rather than searching and seizing property. This is just one example, but it's worth taking note of their emphasis on screening measures. In this context, it's used as a less intrusive way to assess threats to courthouses.

What we're discovering about Bill 35 as the debate unfolds is that the powers of warrantless search offered to court security officers are not limited to the person entering the court, but extend to their vehicle or the vehicle in which they were a passenger. This is troubling for a number of reasons. We must remember—and I welcome the opportunity to remind my colleagues across the floor—that not everyone in this province owns a vehicle. Indeed, many people in Ontario, and in my riding of Windsor West, rely either on public transportation or their support network to get to and from work, school and, from time to time, court. I also know a number of families that share one vehicle among two working adults and two teens who are of driving age. What about ride-sharing programs where the passenger knows very little about the driver outside of their Kijiji ad? How would the provisions outlined in this bill manifest in these situations?

I am also curious as to what level of oversight Bill 35 will have, if enacted. That is to say, what can I expect if I walk into a Toronto courthouse, if I walk into a Windsor courthouse or if I walk into a courthouse in Sault Ste. Marie? I believe the level of security at each facility is administered individually by each institution, but what checks and balances has this government developed to ensure that the proper level of security is administered at the many diverse institutions across the province?

This becomes exceptionally challenging when we move from a discussion of police or peace officers to a discussion of privately sourced security officers. This is not to imply that private security guards are inadequate to enforce the provisions of Bill 35, but what specialized training will they be required to receive? Has the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services been in discussions with his colleagues in cabinet on the topic of training? These are questions that I hope to receive answers to as the debate continues on the bill.

During the debates on this bill, we've heard several times about how much consultation has gone into this process. I must admit that some New Democratic amendments to previous versions of this bill did make it into the version of the bill being debated today, and I'm happy to see this. This includes reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities and those wearing articles of faith.

The section reads as follows: "When a person who is authorized by a board or by the commissioner as described in subsection (1) exercises powers under this section with respect to other persons, he or she shall ensure that those persons are accommodated in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Human Rights Code, and this includes accommodation in connection with creed or disability."

Like I said, we are glad to see that this was included. It's important that we accommodate people and it's particularly important to constituents in my riding of Windsor West, where we embrace and celebrate diversity. It's important that our laws reflect this.

That being said, I am hearing from my colleagues on the other side of the floor about the level of consultation with human rights organizations like the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. What I have not heard, however, is why some of their recommended amendments did not make it into this bill. This is not to say the government did not have their reasons, but in order to assess these reasons we need to know what they were.

Even OPSEU president Smokey Thomas, who was welcomed to the Legislature today, presented a survey for his members around court security which rejected limits placed on public access to courts as proposed in Bill 35.

Consultation involves compromise. It is not enough to list off a number of stakeholders that were consulted, but I hope that some level of debate will be allotted to understand why certain provisions were included and some were not.

Some of the powers allotted for the purpose of court security might be justified with the individual functions of the building, but not all courthouses need the same level of security. Moreover, this legislation should strive to identify and distinguish between the different powers given to courthouse staff. I would note that this provision remains unchanged from previous bills.

Again, Speaker, I thank you for recognizing me today and giving me the opportunity to debate this bill. To conclude, I am pleased that the Public Works Protection Act will be repealed. We must ensure that all legislation is clear, concise and easily interpreted. We must also ensure that it is not prone to abuse by this government or any government hereafter and that the citizens of this province are well informed. This is why my New Democrat colleagues and I would like to see written notices at the entrance of courthouses and nuclear facilities, listing the possible requirements for entry and the consequences of disobeying those requirements.

Again, people need to be informed. Security guards and police forces need to fully understand what they can and cannot do. They must be adequately trained to apply the powers allotted to them in this bill. They also need to know the consequences that their actions could elicit.

I look forward to the continuing debate on this bill, the interjections from my fellow members and public opinion on this matter moving forward. I think it's important to note the last line, which is the public opinion on this matter, and I would hope that there will not be a time-allocated motion and that there will be further debate.

Interjection: You're going to share your time.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm going to share my time with the member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor-Tecumseh has the floor.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a great pleasure for me, on behalf of my constituents in Windsor-Tecumseh, espe-

cially to stand today and make comments to echo what has already been said by the great member from Windsor West, who, I must say, is doing a tremendous job since she was elected a few short months ago, coming to this chamber and holding the government to account.

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I find interesting some of the points that she raised, especially around training, when you talk about the training of the courthouse security officers in various parts of the province. What is not being addressed in this bill is how that training will be given and how consistent it will be region to region. That's troubling because, as we all know, people that come to the courthouses on a regular basis aren't always the same in different parts of the province. So in order to deal with different populations, there has to be more sophisticated training, I would argue, in order to deal with persons in the north, persons in the south, or in the Brampton area or downtown Toronto.

I know when I was covering the courts as a reporter, we'd often have a series of regulars that would always show up. That was their way of passing the time, I guess. After they went to Tim Hortons, they'd come to the courthouse and they would spend their day there chatting with the prosecutors and the lawyers and some of the people on trial, and with the reporters. When I was covering more serious trials up around London, I know there were people up there even considering writing a book on the trials that they had sat in on and what they had seen unfold.

But what troubles me, I guess, more than anything is that when you come to a courthouse, you expect it's like coming to Queen's Park. I don't believe you should have to answer and prove your identity just to walk in the doors of Queen's Park. I believe that as an open institution and as an institution that we value, we want to be seen as having an open-door policy. We want to be able to come to Queen's Park and, sure, you say who you are and get your visitor's pass, but then you're not asked why you're here, necessarily. "I want to come and watch question period" is all it takes.

But if you're standing in line at a courthouse—say you're a woman who has been assaulted. We know that within the courthouse system your identity is protected. Yet if you come in line and a security officer says, "What's your name? Why are you here? Where are you going?", you may feel obligated to reveal your name and to say you're one of the victims in an assault case and you're here. Your identity is protected in the courthouse, in the courtroom where the trial is being held, but the people standing behind you in line to get the clearance to come into the courthouse are all of a sudden knowing your identity, knowing who you are and why you're there. That's not part of our system. We should not have to reveal that kind of information in order to gain access to a courthouse where we've been summoned to appear.

What troubles me as well is the fact, and it has been raised by the great member from Windsor West, that if I borrow a ride to get to the courthouse and for whatever reason—you know, I get a friend of mine or some guy

who I think is a friend of mine to drop me off. If unbeknownst to him or her I run into some kind of trouble at the screening area and all of a sudden I'm being taken aside for more examination, this new act gives the courthouse security people the right to ask me how I got there, who drove me there, and to go out and do a search on the vehicle that I arrived in. To me, that goes a bit beyond what I believe are my civil rights—my rights as a Canadian, my rights as a proud citizen of Ontario—and the rights of the person that drove me there. If you gave me a ride to the courthouse in your vehicle because mine broke down, the courthouse screening officer should not have the ability, which he or she does under this act, to tell you to open your trunk and to tell you, "I'm looking under your seats because the guy you drove here just gave me a problem in screening."

I think that's wrong. You don't have to let a security officer open your trunk because you drove me to a courthouse. It just doesn't make any sense. That's one of the things in this bill that we really have to spend more attention on.

I know that some members of the government want us to sit down, be quiet and not interfere with what they see as a good piece of legislation. I don't happen to see this as a good piece of legislation. I can support the intent of it; I would like to see it improved. I would hope that, by listening to the opposition, the government will say, "They did raise a couple of valid points, and we will improve this bill."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes this afternoon to respond to the comments from the members from Windsor West and Windsor-Tecumseh. I thank them for their remarks.

For those watching on television, this is Bill 35, second reading. The bill is entitled Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act. It will repeal the outdated PWWA, the Public Works Protection Act—I think people have heard a bit about that—it will amend the Police Services Act to address court security, and it will set out stand-alone legislation respecting security at electricity generating facilities and other defined critical infrastructure.

I think it's important for people, as well, to be aware—because I have heard some mention of the fact that this bill has been time-allocated—that this is indeed the third time that the bill has been introduced. There has been, as I'm told, over 19 hours of debate on this particular piece of legislation already over nine days. It has been debated, as I've said, in the Legislature and through committee, as well, and as I understand it, the bill is reflective of the feedback that has been provided through the committee process. It seems to me like it has had a pretty thorough vetting already.

I would say that today we in fact moved a motion to have night sittings—that was voted against by both of the opposition parties—so that we can in fact get this legislation as well as other legislation dealt with before the Legislature rises within a couple of weeks.

I would mention, as well, that the member from Windsor-Tecumseh mentioned an open-door policy. I think that most people understand that the world has changed. I think that most people understand that we need to, as best as we possibly can, maintain an open-door policy. But I always like to remind people that when we make decisions on issues like this, we are making decisions not only on our own behalf, but on behalf of the people who work in this precinct and in the province of Ontario as well.

I thank you very much for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise to respond to Bill 35 today, in a couple of moments.

I'd like to commend the member from Windsor-Tecumseh on his remarks today.

Yes, this bill has been debated at length, for sure. We all remember the events of the inquiry after the G20, when there were a number of incidents that took place. The act was brought in in the 1930s sometime, under the Hepburn government, to do with issues about security, with hydroelectric facilities and other facilities.

Even in my own city, in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, during the war they were building a facility there for—Polymer, at the time—Polysar. They were building that, and that was to provide rubber for the war industry, for the tires. The rubber plantations had been taken over by the Axis powers, so to build that rubber plant at that time, the military—the United States army—along with the Canadian government and the United States government, came in. They put in a lot of rules and they built that plant. You probably couldn't do that today. It was in a time of war. There were armed guards. They were ex-military; a lot of them were drafted, brought over or seconded from the US military, as well, because it was for the US war effort as well as the Canadian war effort.

Acts like this were implemented to guard Niagara Falls, because of power generation, as well. But I'm sure that, over 70 years, times have changed. There's still that threat out there, maybe more prevalent today than it was 70 years ago, but it's certainly time to take another look at it.

I look forward to the rest of the debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

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Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to comment on one of my colleagues from across the way talking about how the world has changed. I agree with that. The world has changed.

This bill would repeal the Public Works Protection Act, the legislation that was used to search citizens near the security fence during the G20. The second part of that is probably the most interesting. It would amend the Police Services Act, granting powers to court security guards—untrained private security officers. Now, think about that—untrained.

How would we like to have that right here at Queen's Park? Instead, what do we have here at Queen's Park? We have people who are highly trained, highly skilled, doing their job, protecting us every day. Yet I could go to court not knowing who the individual is, male or female, and what they could do is search me. Does that make sense to anybody? Put your hand up on the other side if you think it makes sense that somebody is untrained—you don't know who they are; they're a private company—and they're going to search you.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No hands went up.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Not one hand from your side wanted to go through that.

You know, I fly out of Toronto and expect to have some form of security. What they have there is a machine I can walk through. Doesn't that make sense? But to have somebody who is untrained just drives me nuts. I can't believe they're thinking of doing it.

This means that if you show up at court to defend yourself—just show up to defend yourself, which is one of our fundamental rights in this province—before you even enter the courthouse, you could have your car searched without any good reason. Before you walk through the court doors, someone is already presuming you are guilty of something.

This has to be taken right out of this bill. If you're going to have security officers, they have to be trained.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I am very pleased to rise today; this is something that's fairly new for me. It actually gives me great pleasure to talk about the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, and I thank the members for their comments.

I want to talk about the reason we are reintroducing this bill. As mentioned, this is an act that dates from 1939. It is time, I agree—it is time more than ever—to bring in an act that will be modern, transparent and focused on what today's world is all about, which is making sure we are protecting the people who are at the courthouse, in nuclear facilities and in large electricity-generating facilities.

When you look at what happened at the G20, maybe I was not part of it as a new member, but I know that all levels of government have realized that there were some situations where we could have done better. This is why we are moving forward on reintroducing this bill.

There were two reports—I'll need the notes here—one by former Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry and the other by the Ombudsman, Mr. Marin, who recommended that the PWPA be repealed and replaced with "more modern, focused legislation."

The G20 summit was an unprecedented event, and this bill will help us deal with what could potentially happen and have everyone ready for the Pan Am Games.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the third party members can respond. The member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to talk about a comment that the member from Ottawa-Orléans made. She spoke about being transparent. We, as New Democrats, have mentioned our concern that there is definitely the opportunity for abuse by the government with this bill. When we talk about transparency, we are now looking at having this bill time-allocated. This means that discussion is cut off, which shows, in my opinion, a lack of transparency and a great disrespect to the people of my riding of Windsor West and every riding in Ontario that is represented by this side of the House.

I think that this bill also deters people from wanting to assist or support a friend or a family member who has to appear before a court. I personally would be very hesitant to assist a family member or a friend by driving them to the courthouse or stepping foot into the courthouse if I knew that, because somebody doesn't like the way that I look or the way that I'm dressed or they suspect I might be up to something, I could then be subjected to a search, and that if they have an issue with the person that I'm coming to court with, they then can search my property.

So there are great concerns about just how open this bill is and how transparent the act to move to time allocation is. Again, I just reiterate that we want our courts to be safe, we want our courthouses to be safe, but we also want them to be accessible. I believe this bill will deter people from attending courthouses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Further debate?

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I've been here 11 years now. This is the first time I got a Liberal speaking slot. I guess they're not going to speak to it this afternoon, but I'm glad to be up and ready at the crack of a whip, if necessary, to fill in a spot for my caucus here.

Bill 35 is the third time around for essentially the same bill. I know when I was the critic back in 2012, it was Bill 34, ironically; just one bill away numerically. It was the 34th bill brought forward by the government after the election of 2011. I had the opportunity to speak to it as the critic for community safety and correctional services. I opened up my statement that day by indicating to the government that we would be supporting the bill. We supported it back then, and I'm indicating to the government that we'll be supporting it again in the third time around. Maybe the third time's the charm; I don't know.

But as I indicated to the government back then, that might be the last good thing I have to say in my—it was an hour speech then, as I was the lead for the opposition, and it's only going to be 20 minutes. So I don't know if I can get everything in, but if they want to give me more time, I'll be pleased to accept it. The reason I said that was because I had some criticisms of the government with respect to this bill and why we were there at all.

I think that everybody understands and accepts that the Public Works Protection Act—it's time for a redo. It's time to repeal it and bring in a new piece of more

progressive legislation that more speaks to the time we live in now. The Public Works Protection Act was a bill that was brought in at the time of the Second World War. Now—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: The good old days.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, the good old days, the Minister of Transportation says. Well, there aren't that many people in this House who were even alive at the time of the Second World War, so a lot of things have changed since then. You have to think of the mindset of the world at the time. The world was at war. We were very concerned about our own safety and that kind of thing. The government of Canada brought in the War Measures Act at that time, and the provincial government brought in the Public Works Protection Act at that time.

I believe it was around—I can't think of the date now, but back in Winnipeg, they actually had a "what if" day.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A "what if" day?

Mr. John Yakabuski: A "what if" day. The story was, what if the Nazis attacked here? It was like a mock exercise to determine how they would react if they would have been attacked during the war. So it speaks to the mindset of where people were at that time.

The world was at war, and at that time, it was not certain that we were going to be the side winning that war. When Hitler attacked Poland to start the war, he was at a distinct advantage, because he had been preparing for that war for some time, when a lot of the rest of the world was just hoping that it wouldn't happen.

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So there's no question that the act itself is in need of some updating. But the reason the legislation ever got here in the first place, back in 2012—I think it was introduced in early 2012. On February 29, 2012, in fact, I spoke to this bill as the lead for the opposition. I think it was appropriate that it was a leap year, because it's like it never happened. Here we are in 2014, going through the same exercise in December 2014 as in February 2012.

Some people will question, "Where have you been? What has been happening? Why haven't we moved on from this? Why haven't we brought this piece of legislation forward sooner?" Well, for various reasons. The Parliament—you'll recall that we had prorogation as well. You remember that prorogation? That kind of put the kibosh on that bill. Then it came back again. The government called an election. It was up in front of the House again, and then earlier this year Premier Wynne called an election. Here we are, bringing this bill forward in front of the House again.

But one thing hasn't changed, and that is the reason the bill ever came forward in the first place. That was because the government had egg all over its face about the way that it handled security for the G20 summit in Toronto in 2010. We all remember this. You remember this? I want the members of the government to have a look at this. They probably remember it very well, and even those who weren't there heard about it. This was the Ombudsman report on the G20 summit, called Caught in the Act. It was a scathing indictment of the Liberal government and their behaviour during that time.

Unbeknownst to the members of this Legislature—I remember the Attorney General at the time saying that the police asked for this. No, not quite true. What the police asked for was, "We're going to need some additional tools in order to provide security for what is a huge undertaking that we're having in the city of Toronto, a complicated place at the best of times. We're going to have this G20 summit here in Toronto. We're going to need some tools to ensure the safety not only of the general population, but certainly all of the delegates to the convention and their staff as well."

They presumably approached the government and said, "Is there anything in legislation that we can do?" Well, they talked about the Public Works Protection Act. But then, behind closed doors, away from the scrutiny of this Parliament—and you've got to remember that Parliament was sitting at the time. This was not during a time of recess; it was not during a prorogation or anything else. This was during a time when the Parliament was sitting. Then the government, behind closed doors, without talking to any of the people on this side of the House, without sitting down even with House leaders and saying, "This is what we'd like to do," passed the now infamous regulation 233/10. That is the regulation that, unfortunately, the police misinterpreted. They didn't properly understand it and were never properly briefed by the government on their powers and the restrictions on their powers that were actually granted to them in order to police and provide security to the summit at that time.

What happened was certainly a period of embarrassment here in the city of Toronto and for us as members of the Legislature in Ontario. The number of arrests for ostensibly no reason whatsoever, just because the police felt they had to act in that way to provide the security, without due process—and I'm not going to go over and over and over again about each and every case that we talked about. But the Ombudsman, in his report, did speak extensively about the challenges that this regulation brought in by the government posed for the police. He didn't just gloss over the role of the police as well. We've known since then that the police have certainly apologized for some of their actions during the G20 as well.

But you have to ask yourself what precipitated it. Did the police act independently and without the belief that they had been granted the authority? Or did they act because they believed that the province of Ontario—let me take that back—that the cabinet, the Liberal cabinet, passed a regulation that implied to the police that they had all of these sweeping powers?

Had this been taken before the Legislature, where members of all parties had an opportunity to speak to it, where members of all parties had an opportunity to offer their views and perhaps go back to their own stakeholders and say, "What do you think of this? Do you think that this is a necessary change? Do you think that it goes too far?" we would have had that feedback. But how could you get the feedback when you didn't even know it was happening? We weren't even aware, as legislators,

that it was happening. It was all done under the cover of darkness, behind closed doors, in a clandestine way, you would have to think, because the government didn't want us to know what was going on.

That's what we found so insulting as members of this Legislature, each and every one of us elected by our constituents to speak individually on their behalf but, collectively, to speak on behalf of all Ontarians, all 13-and-some-odd million Ontarians. Collectively, we speak for them; we represent them.

We felt like we were shunted to the sidelines as legislators, and the cabinet, in their great wisdom, were going to do what was necessary to ensure that the 2010 G20 summit was a safe place to be.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: How did that work out for them?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to my friend from Windsor-Tecumseh that I would ask you the same question: How did that work out for them? Well, if you want to talk about something that backfired in spades, it would be the passing of that legislation.

On August 18, I believe it was, of the same year—I think of that date because it's my daughter's birthday. I believe that on that date, the community safety and correctional services minister, who was responsible for this, was suddenly shifted into another cabinet portfolio—yes, another one, in the summer, when nobody was paying attention. There was a cabinet shuffle, because they knew the heat was on, as they say. The heat is on.

They didn't want to have anything more to do with that. So what do you do when somebody's under the gun? Shift him into another portfolio. They brought in Jim Bradley, the most experienced member of this Legislature, and gave him the portfolio and said, "She's your baby now. You deal with it."

Anyway, it was a black day—a black eye on Ontario—when they passed that regulation. But we do want to move on. We do want to move on.

On the bill itself, I do say that it's a pretty good piece of legislation. I know my friends in the NDP have some misgivings on some of the courthouse security. We'll get to that if I have time. If they give me extra time, we'll get to it for sure. I know the House leader is considering it.

Let's talk about security at nuclear plants first. After 9/11, the world did change. Our ability or our comfort level in feeling safe all over the free world was changed forever. When those planes struck the twin towers, life as we knew it would never be the same. We had to recognize that in the way that we protected our facilities. Some of our most vulnerable would be our nuclear facilities.

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We all saw what happened when a natural disaster struck the nuclear plants at Fukushima in Japan. That was a natural disaster emanating from an earthquake and then a tidal wave or tsunami. Again, I don't have time to go into all the details. Basically, it pretty well took the nuclear reactors out of business and caused tremendous damage to the Japanese infrastructure and the economy as a result of that, and they're still recovering from it. I do believe that the power is on again at some of those

plants, but it's been an expensive and time-consuming go and plenty of stress for the people of Japan.

But the terrorist attack is something that we have to be always mindful of. I live in Renfrew county, home to Chalk River Nuclear Laboratories, the birthplace of nuclear here in Canada. Since 9/11, it has been a complete sea change about how they conduct security at those plants. They must. It's a federal facility and security has changed. Security has changed at our nuclear power plants. That's a research facility in Chalk River. We have power-producing plants here in Ontario and security has changed at them, and rightfully so. We've had to make those upgrades, those changes.

I had the opportunity as the critic at the time to have some pretty good back and forth with the government. Some amendments were made to the bill at the time. I do believe that the bill we're getting back today is essentially what we had back then. I haven't read it over verbatim, but I believe essentially it is the same, with the changes incorporated that we had through hearings at that time.

Now, in those days we were actually having hearings on legislation. We were having good, fulsome committee hearings on legislation. So it's not just the security around power plants that has changed. Apparently, in this Legislature things have changed too, because we don't seem to have those hearings for legislation any more. The government just comes in with a time allocation motion and, zap, there you go: one day, two hours, Bob's your uncle, and the thing's law. That's the way it goes now.

It seems that the government House leader doesn't like committee hearings. I don't want to fault the government House leader—he's a nice fella—but he takes his orders from that office over there, right about there—just right over there, that office over there. If you just go in a straight line, you'll go right into the office of where the decisions are made, and all of the minions on this side of the House just have to do as they're told. They just have to do as they're told. I don't fault him directly, but he is part of the plan. He is part of the plan and he is carrying out the directive of the master.

But I do agree that the changes that are in this legislation are necessary, so I am supporting the government for that reason. I want them to record this and keep it in mind that I'm on the record as saying I'm supporting the government on this piece of legislation. I likely won't be supporting them when they bring in time allocation because I cannot support time allocation. It's just not something that is in my DNA at this time.

So, lots of changes in the bill as a result of the bill about security at nuclear power plants, and I'm all for that, because you know that nuclear produces about 60% of our electricity here in the province of Ontario. It provides good jobs to a high number of people all across Ontario. Directly and indirectly, we're probably talking about 40,000 high-paying jobs in the province of Ontario as a result of our nuclear industry. And where would we be without that 60% of our power? I wouldn't be speaking in here because the lights would be off. Nobody would be picking it up on a microphone, and that would really trouble me because I want you all to hear this.

Nuclear power is the backbone of our system here in Ontario at this time, and I support the government on the refurbishment of our nuclear reactors as well, because that's going to be an important component as we move forward in the electricity sector. I don't agree with a lot of their energy policy, but I think we're in pretty close step on how we view the need to support our nuclear industry here in the province of Ontario. Although I have a different view about new build than they have, because I want to make sure that 40 years from now we're still getting a reliable portion of our power from the best source that we have out there right now, which is nuclear, the one that we can depend on, because we don't have a lot of ability to grow our hydroelectric system in the province of Ontario. We don't have the reservoir systems that they have in Manitoba and Quebec, for example. We have to play with the hand that we're dealt, and nuclear is a big part of that.

I don't have a lot of time left, but on the courts as well, we have to make sure that our courts are safe. Whenever you have a situation like that, there are going to be some people who think that measures that are taken are going too far in infringing upon individuals' rights. But once you get into that court system, I think you have to relinquish some of your privacy for the safety of the general public as a whole and also the people who work within the court system. The changes that have been made, I'm satisfied with them. I know my friends in the NDP would like to see some changes there. But at the end of the day, I think this is a pretty good bill, and we'll make it even better if we get it to committee, if the House leader allows it to happen. But the way things are going, we never know. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to talk to my colleague here who talked about the election. This has been coming up a lot in the last few days here in the House, which is kind of surprising to me. But once again—I can't say this too often—the PCs are right: It was the Liberals that called the election. I just want to make sure, because today in this very House it was mentioned again that the NDP called the election. So we're clear on that, I wanted to make sure—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I didn't want to start a cross-debate, Mr. Speaker. But I just wanted to make sure there's no confusion, and my colleague from the PCs is absolutely right: It was the Liberals that called the election.

I wanted to say, quickly, that we were here last week debating a bill, Bill 24, and one of the arguments around the unlawful handgun bill was that we should be listening to the experts on what we're doing. I think that's fair. The police are saying, "You've got to give us tools. We're risking our lives every day. You've got to make sure that you support the handgun bill." Yet on the very same issue here, we have experts like the Canadian Civil Liberties Association that do not support the provisions

in schedule 2 of Bill 35. One of the reasons why they're not doing it is what I raised about 20 minutes ago.

Again, my colleague from the PC Party talked about how he wanted to make sure that our courts are secure. The question becomes, how do we secure our courts? I'm agreeing that we should make sure they're safe and make sure they're secure. But, to my colleagues here in all three parties, would it not make sense that if we're going to have security officers who are going to have the right to search us, search our cars, that they would be trained? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I was looking forward to having the opportunity, after listening to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke speak, to talk about the bill and also acknowledge, as always, the very eloquent contribution that that member provided to those of us in the Legislature this afternoon and to thank him for expressing support for the bill, a bill that of course deserves support because, as many will know, this is the third time that our government has introduced this kind of important legislation. Nineteen hours of debate had already taken place on this bill in the Legislature during nine days of debate in a previous session, and 15 MPPs from all three parties had already had the opportunity to speak on this proposed legislation when the bill had previously come forward in the House. So, lots of tremendous reasons, lots of strong reasons to acknowledge that the member who spoke initially in debate this afternoon is exactly on the right page with respect to supporting the content and the thrust of this legislation.

Not for the first time today, unfortunately, I was struck when the member from Niagara Falls spoke, as the member from Essex spoke earlier today in this Legislature. There seems to be this very bizarre thing that has occurred to the members of the NDP caucus, Speaker, both in question period today and many times in this House since we've come back post the June 12 election. Members from that caucus, members from the NDP, seem to have forgotten, or seem to have revised history repeatedly, with respect to what actually took place.

1650

Here's the great news, Speaker: Regardless of their attempts to forget—and I can understand, given the results of June 12, why they'd want to forget. But given the results of June 12, and given the opportunity that we have been given, the mandate that Premier Wynne and this government have been given, we will continue to focus on bringing forward legislation like the one that we are discussing here today. We will continue to make the investments that are needed to build the province up, and we will continue to provide progress.

Ultimately, Speaker, the people of Ontario spoke loudly and clearly on June 12. They gave us a mandate to build the province up. With legislation like this one, that's exactly what we will continue to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to the comments from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

The clock isn't going, Speaker. I just thought I'd remind you of that up there.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I can keep speaking for how long?

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: All right. Sorry; I wasn't aware of the rules around here.

I was quite taken aback about his knowledge of the previous bill and certainly about why it came into effect dating back to the days of World War II. That was a different time than it is now, when the legislators had to take some pretty severe action, because, as we all know—or should know—the enemy was in our waters around Canada. They came up the St. Lawrence, and they landed agents in the United States. So those were times when we had to take strong action. Certainly, this legislation should have been introduced sooner at some point, because we have haven't been in those trying times since then.

We have voiced our support for this bill, but we see this government time and time again talk about transparency. The member brought that up: How many bills have we had time-allocated in this Legislature?

I look back to the Child Care Modernization Act. It is so flawed, and yet there is time allocation on it, and the government is going to pass it. They haven't even talked to a lot of the other experts who wanted to speak to it.

Now I'm sure they're going to do that with this one. They will probably time-allocate it, so a lot of the people who want to speak to this bill in committee aren't going to be permitted that right, and that's really too bad. As legislators, we should take all the information we can gather in order to form good legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I sit in this House and I watch the government on more than one occasion minimize the concerns of the third party and the official opposition when it comes to things. They think that they have got a handle on everything that should be in a bill and ignore some of the things we do well in committee. Have we not learned our lesson, Speaker?

I was around—I don't know if some of them were—for the FLQ crisis. I remember the riots in Seattle. I remember—I wasn't around—the Winnipeg strike. I remember the 1946 strike of the Steelworkers in Hamilton. I remember the strikes in Sudbury. I remember the strikes and struggles of the people of this country. Have we learned nothing, Speaker?

Let's talk about the Quebec Legislature. What happened there? The papers are announcing that some of the officers here don't carry weapons. What are we doing? Have we learned nothing from all the things that have gone on?

The member mentioned the twin towers. He's mentioned other things. Times have changed, Speaker, but we

have to change with the times. If there are things that other opposition parties bring forward that are important about shoring up a bill that has weak points—and being ignored by the government really hurts, because we are elected from the people of our areas. We bring things to the table that are important. They seem to dismiss some of the things that we feel are important. When they stand up and say, "Well, the NDP had some concerns"—you're darn right we had some concerns, and some good ones. Maybe once in a while you should listen to those concerns of ours and bring them forward to committee instead of being so arrogant all the time that we know nothing and you know what's best. Mother knows best over there. It's really irritating, because I've lived through these things. I've seen changes.

Security must change. This bill is long overdue, and they blame us for dragging our feet on it. This should have been brought forward 30 years ago, not last month or last week; 30 or 40 years ago. We could have maybe eliminated some of these problems.

These people have been in government too long—they've been there too long. That's it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes questions and comments. I return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his reply.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls, the Minister of Transportation, the member for Perth–Wellington and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who is proudly wearing his Ticats hat today after their very, very excellent showing in the Grey Cup. Unfortunately, they didn't bring the cup home to Ontario, but they did us proud anyway.

Look, a lot of the points that have been made on my address—I support some of the things that have been said. I appreciate what the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is saying about the need to change legislation with the times. I think he pointed out very, very vividly that for this Legislature, or any other legislative body, to work, the government must respect the view of the other side. No one has a monopoly on wisdom, the truth or all the best ideas. When the government thinks about operating independently and freezing out the opposition, which is happening a lot in this session, then it does itself a disservice. It doesn't just do a disservice to democracy; it does itself a disservice, because it is denying itself the experience that sits on this other side. We've all been elected as well by the people in our respective constituencies. There must be a reason we got here. We must be doing something right.

So I would implore the government, as I finish up here in my last few seconds, to change its attitude about the way that it is ramming legislation through so that you can take advantage of the experience and wisdom on this side, and we would be able to then much more greatly appreciate the experience and wisdom on your side. I think we need to work more collectively.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on the various bills that

are presented here, and equally to this one: Bill 35, *Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires*. I can read French not too badly. I can't speak it too well yet, but I'm working on it.

This is an important bill we're discussing: An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014. It's basically three pieces of legislation put into one. The first piece of legislation repeals the Public Works Protection Act. It's been on the books for a long time, since 1939. That's been said here quite a few times. It's like a lot of legislation that is sitting on the books; it was created for a purpose, and it isn't really removed because the purpose disappears. World War II is over, and the purpose disappeared.

But where this legislation reappeared was when it was misused by the Liberal cabinet. While this House was sitting—and I'm taking this on advisement from people who have been here a lot longer than I have been here—the Liberal cabinet at the time used this legislation to abuse people's rights.

1700

It was interesting. I really enjoy sitting in the House and listening to these debates, because I learn things. The Minister of Transportation just said that this bill has been debated for 19 hours, and that that should be sufficient. In the G20, some people spent longer than 19 hours in a cage because of what the Liberal government did at the time, so 19 hours to debate a bill isn't that long, because the abuse of regulations has much bigger consequences.

One of the things when I was watching this on TV, because I wasn't here at the time, is, "How can this be happening in Ontario?" Because no one in Ontario, deep down, believes that things like that could happen. I was in the House when this bill was being discussed another time, and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change brought up a point: that one of the things that precipitated this was that where this G20 was held was an extremely bad place for security. It's not all the Liberal government's fault, or the Liberal cabinet at the time; it was an extremely bad choice for security. There were other places that were suggested that would have been much easier to provide security to.

It started out badly, and that was the feds, but what the Libs did, what the cabinet did—because it wasn't this House, it was the cabinet, and now they're repealing this act. That's a good thing. I don't think anyone here is against repealing the Public Works Protection Act, but some of the powers that they're giving for courthouses—courthouses are a different thing, and I'm going to talk about generating facilities in a little while. We don't have any nuclear facilities in my riding, but we have some very big hydroelectric facilities. They also need to be protected. They're in this act.

But for courthouses, the powers they're giving for basically warrantless search—maybe things in the big

city work differently than back home in Timiskaming-Cochrane, but in the Haileybury courthouse, if somebody walks in and all of a sudden a security guard has the right to search the neighbour's car—that's just something that doesn't happen in our Ontario, because our Ontario just isn't like that. It doesn't happen when people come into our gallery, and this is as much a courthouse as anything else in this province. So does that really make sense?

I'm asking, as an Ontarian, do those searching powers, those warrantless powers, make sense? Do we need security in courthouses—strong security? Very much so. Do we need security here? Of course, but there's a fine balance between security and democracy, because I know some very secure places where you're not allowed to express your views like we are in this place. There's a very fine line between true democracy and what I sometimes think this government, with what it's doing right now with time-allocating, saying it's going to negotiate, but not negotiating, just time-allocating—I think they're also treading a fine line. I really do.

But in the courthouses, to make courthouses be secure—of course. But should people be frightened to enter a courthouse?

Interjection: No.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, not in a democracy. Then we've lost something.

You have to understand that there are courthouses all over this province, and if you're going to give the same powers all over this province—I've got another courthouse in a college. It's part of Northern College in Kirkland Lake. So where are these search and seizure powers? Are they at the front doors of the college?

Really, think about that. What you're doing with this part of the act is basically giving the same powers, on a smaller scale, that were abused at the G20. We have to really think about that. I think we have to take the time to talk about that and really think about it, because we're going to come to the day—like I said, this is as much a court, and I've spent a lot more time in here than I've spent in the court in Haileybury, and I've spent a few days in the court in Haileybury.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. I got married in the court in Haileybury, and I'm still married, very happily.

But under the notice—if this passes, some of my guests might have been searched.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, really. That's an issue. That's something you really have to think about, especially when we're saying you have to identify yourself and we have the right to search the vehicle you came in. You're going a bit too far. That's one of the things we have said repeatedly, because to us, when you're creating legislation, you have to look at how this legislation could be used and how this legislation could be abused.

The Public Works Protection Act was created for something in wartime, and it was abused at the G20, and this, as far as courthouses, has the same potential.

The member from Windsor West brought up a very good point in her discussion—

Interjection: As she always does.

Mr. John Vanthof: —as she always does. But this was a really good point, and I didn't hear it too many other times: If you're going to do something like this, you don't post it on a piece of paper this big; you'd better put it on a big billboard in front of the Haileybury courthouse and in front of Northern College and all the other little courthouses. People would read it and see, you know, that they have the right to search, they have the right to search the car you came in, and people would say, "Really, in our Ontario? Really?" That's a question you have to ask.

Going back to the third part, security for electricity-generating facilities and nuclear facilities, that's a whole different issue. Most of us have probably had opportunities—as an MPP, you have some incredible opportunities, because to truly understand your riding and understand the people who work there, you get to tour facilities. I recently toured the Lower Notch power dam at the bottom end of Montreal River, which dumps into Lake Timiskaming. They're rebuilding the thing. I think it's costing \$70 million; OPG is rebuilding it.

I learned something: The biggest turbines in Ontario are in my riding, at the Lower Notch power dam. Is that the biggest power producer? No. But the two biggest turbines are there. There are more in Niagara Falls, but the two biggest ones are right there. They were pulling one out, and we went right to the bottom where that turbine was. It was an incredible tour. I thank OPG for allowing us to see that. It really increased my understanding of hydroelectric power.

I fully appreciate that you shouldn't be able to walk in there off the street, because you could create a lot of damage. No one is expecting to have the same access to a nuclear station or a hydro generation station. It's a whole different issue, and yes, you need strong security measures there, very strong security measures, but a different type of security than you need at a courthouse, because access to justice, the ability to voice your opinion are two of the pillars on which our society is built. During the G20, when this government—the Liberal government previous—arrested 1,100 people without a warrant, they abused the Public Works Protection Act. In this new bill, there is still that ability to be abused. It's there. The members across the aisle can smile and tell us how this is so much more efficient to time-allocate everything, but the fact is that the ability to abuse is there.

1710

One thing I've learned in my fairly various capacities and in what I've done is that most of the time you make legislation or regulation not for the majority of people; you make it for a few people. You make it for some of the people who want to break the laws, but in this case you also have to make it for the people who enforce the laws.

This legislation leaves a lot to be desired in that case. Because when you are going into a courthouse—you know what, a lot of people who go to courthouses have problems. Some of them are their own, some of them are

not their own, but a lot of them have issues. They already, obviously, feel persecuted. If this legislation is fully applied in courthouses in my rural riding—I like to focus on where I come from, because I know the people where I come from—to the letter of the law, it would deny some people justice because there are people who, if they knew what the law actually said, would be very leery about coming into a courthouse.

That is our one big problem. There are other issues with this legislation, but the one big problem is that it denies or has the possibility to deny—if it's applied evenly, accurately and if everything is perfect, this legislation will work, but it leaves room to be abused.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's open to interpretation.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right. My colleague from—which riding are you from, Percy?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. John Vanthof: Windsor—Tecumseh.

Interjection: We're going to make you Speaker, John.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, I'd be a terrible Speaker.

Interjection: Telling people to sit down all the time.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm still waiting for the Speaker to tell me to sit down.

It leaves a lot to interpretation; that's the problem. Because bills like this, why they make us a bit uneasy—or a lot uneasy—is we see what happened. This didn't happen in 1939. During the G20, when those people were put basically in cages for longer than 19 hours, longer than this bill has been debated, that didn't happen in another country on TV—it happened for me on TV, but it happened in my Ontario. This bill still leaves that issue open for courthouses. You're still, on the courthouse part, giving them just as much power as the PWPA had over the G20. That's a big issue.

I think I've about covered it. I could read a bit more French, and fill up my three minutes. But I think lots of times with legislation—and specifically with this bill, but it shows up with lots of bills. I fully appreciate that we have to make legislation that works in cities like the GTA. I fully, fully appreciate that, but the legislation that we pass here also has to work in small town Ontario; it has to work in northern Ontario; it has to work in remote northern Ontario, where there are also court facilities.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It has to be consistent.

Mr. John Vanthof: It has to be consistent—a great comment from the member from Windsor—Tecumseh; he's helping me fill my minutes.

That's something that this government hasn't demonstrated, specifically with time-allocating and specifically holding committee meetings in Toronto. We appreciate that there's a lot of people in Toronto. We fully understand that. I've said it before in this House: Now that I've had the opportunity to live in Toronto part-time, I have a much better appreciation of the struggles that people living in Toronto face. They are fully understood. But I question whether some of the members in this House who are on the other side, pushing, pushing, pushing—and no time for hearings anywhere else or anything—I question if they truly understand what happens in the

Northern College courthouse or what happens in the Haileybury Courthouse. I really question if they understand that, and it's an issue. It's a big issue.

Many things in this bill are passable. The government has made some change in this bill that we actually advocated for. That's a good thing. But this bill still leaves room for abuse, and that's something that I really wanted to put on the record: that this bill, if it's used to the full impact of its ability by people with either uninformed intentions—that was part of the problem with the G20. The police weren't out to hurt people; they didn't understand what their powers were and weren't. With this bill, with court security, they might not understand either. That's a big issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to comment on the bill. There has been a fair bit of discussion about process, so I think it might be worthwhile to actually go back and talk about the actual content of the bill.

The bill proposes to repeal the outdated Public Works Protection Act. I think there has been a fair bit of consensus here that we need to do that. It then goes on to set out stand-alone legislation respecting security at electricity generating facilities and other defined critical infrastructure. In particular, with respect to electricity generating and nuclear facilities, the bill would require any person who wishes to enter or is on the premises to produce identification and provide information for the purpose of assessing the person's security risk.

The member spoke about having the opportunity to tour various facilities as an MPP. I've had an opportunity to tour a nuclear plant. What strikes me about this bill is that, in fact, the process that seems to be laid out in the bill actually isn't any different from the current process, that everybody, including an MPP, who is going into a nuclear generating facility goes through extensive screening—as it well should be—before you're allowed into a nuclear facility. I haven't been in, necessarily, any of the big hydroelectric generators, but quite frankly, from a point of security of generation, I would hope that we also have similar security there if the facility is of any size.

So I think that there's a lot of consensus that those requirements are actually quite reasonable and that we actually do need to get on with passing this act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's an honor to stand in my place and make a few comments on the speech that the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane just delivered. I share some of your views. Certainly, you went on at length about security in courtrooms. It is different in rural Ontario. I certainly can understand that. The member and I come from the same background in the farming community. Our towns are small and most everybody knows everybody.

1720

He asked the question: How could this happen in Ontario, the G20 fiasco? One of the reasons it could

happen in Ontario is because nobody knew what this government was doing at the time. They talk about open and transparent governments. We haven't seen that yet in my time here, and certainly not in the last few weeks that we've been here, because of closure rules and the way the committees are structured, where our voice is not heard the way we would like it to be heard.

The member brought up the issue about security guards at our courts and had issue with the training of these guards, if they're properly trained, and what may happen that could infringe upon our rights as citizens in Ontario.

I would hope that the government would make sure that these security guards are properly trained and knew what they could do before they did anything wrong. But then, how do we know this? How are we going to know this? Because this government doesn't tell us anything. It's just done, it's whisked through Parliament here, and unfortunately, our say is not heard the way we would like it to be heard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand on behalf of the constituents in my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh and make comments to the very passionate member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who spoke with a lot of vim and vigour about some of the things that have gone on that have led to this bill.

I think it's good to be reminded, when he talks about the people who spent 19 hours or longer in a metal cage during the G20, that no charges were ever brought against them. They were just kettled, brought in, handcuffed, held—no charges; no apologies ever offered, either; no phone call. They were made to feel like criminals. Why did it happen? Because the Liberal cabinet said it could.

Prime Minister Harper said, "I'm going to host a summit and instead of doing it on the CNE grounds, we're going to do it in downtown Toronto. The Liberal cabinet is going to help us out. Police officers from around the province are going to come in and lend a hand." Well, it didn't work out the way they wanted it to, and that's very unfortunate.

Ontario: "a place to stand, a place to grow"; "yours to discover"—it's almost like we're discovering new ways to screw up the system. Why would you want to go to a courthouse and be subject to all this search and seizure? It's like we're making a make-work project for lawyers to go out and revise this legislation afterwards, because it just won't stand up.

For me to go to a courthouse and have somebody go out and look inside the trunk of the car that drove me there—what are we doing to our civil rights? What are we doing? There are changes that have to be made to make this bill more acceptable to the greater population, and as it stands right now, that part of the legislation really needs to be changed.

Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm happy to stand in this place and make some comments from the 20 minutes or so when the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane brought to our attention the bill that's before us.

In a way, it's sad to hear that it hasn't been paid much attention. It's been in this House three times. We got some pretty good comments from Mr. Marin. We engaged the retired Chief Justice McMurtry to give us some advice.

Interjection: McMurtry, a Liberal?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Where have you been? They bring some very good comments in. Yes, there were some issues in the G20; I think we all agree to that. I think you heard in the past that there were some previous governments that had the same opportunity of doing what we're doing right now, or their way, and they totally ignored it. Nothing had changed that was there. Nothing has changed.

I believe, in a previous incarnation of this bill, the NDP made some good comments about the amendments. I believe they were taken to heart and they were incorporated in the revised legislation in front of us now; the same with the members of the opposition, the Conservative Party.

I just fail to understand. This bill should have passed a long time ago, so if another incident were to happen, we'd be ready for it. You know what? I'm not going to blame the former governments that didn't act on this. Frankly, there was no reason to act because it didn't surface. Like many other things we do here, under all different stripes, we tend to react when something out of the ordinary happens. I agree that the G20 should have been somewhere else besides downtown, 100%. But the fact is, it happened there, and we're acting.

Speaker, I urge everybody: Let's get on with this and get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for his reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Education, the member from Perth–Wellington, my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh and the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

For the Minister of Education, I agree with what she said. But she wasn't talking about courthouses; she was talking about electrical energy facilities, nuclear facilities. I fully agree that they have to be secured. I agree with the member for Perth–Wellington, who said that some things in the country are different. They are, and we have to recognize that. I agree with what the member for Windsor–Tecumseh said. I have a bit of a problem with what the member for Northumberland–Quinte West—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: He won't take it personally. Don't worry.

Mr. John Vanthof: I don't take anything in this House personally, and I really enjoy debate and I enjoy listening. When the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change says something about where the G20 was placed, I listen to that. I agree with that. When the

Minister of Transportation said that it's been debated for 19 hours and that's enough, that hurt me a bit because people spent longer than that in cages because of ministers in previous Liberal administrations. That hurt me a bit.

Standing here is a whole different feeling than if you're in this province put in a jail, and then when you—the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, when he brought up—and I'd forgotten about that. They were never charged, and never an apology was made to those people. That's why we have to be very careful, and that's why I concentrated on the part about the courthouse security, because that part hasn't changed that much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 35—it seems like the government is kind of quiet this afternoon—An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, I've been enjoying the debate this afternoon on this bill, and as I understand, there is some history with it in that it was initially introduced back in February 2012. I believe it was Bill 34 back then. There were some amendments made to it back then at justice policy committee. But then the bill died on the order paper at third reading. I think that was because of the prorogation that happened, if I recall, back at that time. Then, in April 2013, the bill was introduced again. It was Bill 51. And then, of course, that died on the order of paper as well when the election was called by the government. I believe that through the process the opposition has made a number of amendments to the bill, and we're generally supportive of the bill.

1730

So now it's back; it's Bill 35. As you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, it does a few different things, but the bill was originally introduced due to the events that followed the McGuinty cabinet's decision made in the lead-up to the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto to invoke that famous regulation 233/10 under the Public Works Protection Act.

Essentially, what that regulation did was that it designated parts of downtown Toronto as a public work. This was done pretty much in secret. I think the police didn't understand what their powers were. It certainly wasn't communicated to the general public. As a result of the way things unfolded, there were a lot of people who were arrested and charged. Generally, it was a bad situation. There was a full report by Ontario's Ombudsman, which was really quite scathing, called Caught in the Act, that came out in December 2010 on that particular episode.

But I do believe that this original bill, the Public Works Protection Act—as has been mentioned by some other speakers, it was passed in wartime, back in 1939, World War II. Times have changed. Certainly it's time to revamp the act.

However, this bill also does a few other things. So it does away with the Public Works Protection Act. Unlike the sweeping powers of the Public Works Protection Act, this new act, Bill 35, is narrower in scope and covers only limited categories of public infrastructure.

The legislation would do, really, three things: repeal the World War II era Public Works Protection Act, set out a legislative amendment to the Police Services Act to address court security, and set out stand-alone legislation with respect to security at prescribed electricity generating and nuclear facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I would just make the point that security is important, and, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke pointed out, post-9/11, the world did change. Even if we look at recent events, just in the last couple of months we had the shooting of Corporal Nathan Cirillo at the war memorial in Ottawa and then the gunman, subsequent to that, going into our nation's Parliament buildings and basically going on a rampage there. Amazingly, the Sergeant-at-Arms at our national Parliament was able to, with his one pistol—I think it's locked up somewhere—get it out and actually shoot the intruder.

I would say, in this general talk about security, that certainly security is something that needs to be addressed here at Queen's Park as well. I saw a media interview or an interview comment from our Sergeant-at-Arms, Dennis Clark, where I think he was asked whether he has a gun or not, and he basically said, "I have a sword." So I think that's something that—I know there are some members from all parties here at the Legislature looking at it. I think that's something that needs to change here at Queen's Park, frankly, looking at situations like the one that happened in Ottawa so that we are prepared for the worst-case scenario and what could happen there.

This bill deals with, as we've heard, courthouses, and I'll go through some of the specific requirements.

There's a requirement, I believe, that you have to show ID, that you could be searched. Frankly, I think that's not an unreasonable requirement. We're pretty used to it, especially post-9/11, when we go to airports and fly just about anywhere. There's all kinds of security nowadays that we just are kind of used to and we take for granted.

I think courthouses are places where there is increased risk—the nature of the business that's going on there—and I think we have to do what we can to keep the people who work in the courts safe and also keep the people who are attending court safe.

I think we also have to be aware that we don't overstep the bounds of the measures that need to be taken to keep people safe.

I think the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane made some good points, that it is different in different regions of the province, in the rural and northern areas. I know court happens in some pretty small places in Parry Sound–Muskoka. It happens in the community rooms upstairs in hockey arenas. So I think there probably are different sets of challenges there that we need to take into

account. I hope that the government is open to listening to reasonable amendments that might still come forward, even this third time through for the bill, when it does go to committee.

We've seen, with most bills that have been before the Legislature recently, that we reach six and half hours' time of debate here, and then they bring in a time allocation motion and have a very prescriptive time frame and very limited opportunity at committee to have the public make comments and also to make amendments to bills.

I hope they don't rush it too much on this one—whether they'll be bringing time allocation in for that or not—because I think there have been some good points made. I know the third party has some concerns, and I think those concerns should be listened to, so that the government gets this right.

Certainly, we've seen that when it comes to security, they don't always get it right. We just had the recent report done by Ontario's Auditor General on the 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games security. From that report, we see that the Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, states: "A key lesson learned from the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games is the need to carefully plan for and acquire security services as far in advance of the event as possible. As of October 2014, with only nine months remaining before the games begin, TO2015 had only just issued a request for proposals for contract asset protection security services. Nor had TO2015 completed all procurements for security equipment."

She goes on to point out that, as seems to be the case often with this government, the costs went way higher than they budgeted for. The result was that security budget increases are the result of "more in-depth planning" and "increased security requirements."

"The total security budget for the games being funded by Ontario, including both OPP/ISU and TO2015 budget allocations, has increased from \$121.9 million in the 2009 bid budget to \$247.4 million as of September 2014."

As is so often the case with estimates by this government of what things will cost, the security budget for the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games has more than doubled. As we've seen with estimates for costs of things like gas plants that the government has made, they are also way, way off. Cost, and the way that government implements things, is certainly a concern.

Getting back to the bill, it came in large part from the activities at the G20. Of course, just before the G20 was going on—I have to get a mention of the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka in. We had the G8 happening in Huntsville and Muskoka just before that, and I'm happy to say that all the protests in Huntsville were peaceful. Really, there were very few problems that happened. Of course, Muskoka has been named one of the most—I think it was named the best place in the world to go to vacation, and, I'm sure, Parry Sound along with it.

There was a lot of publicity that came out of the G8 that was certainly focused on and highlighted Muskoka and Huntsville—all very positive—

Hon. Jeff Leal: What about the gazebo? Tell us about the gazebo.

Mr. Norm Miller: —and, yes, there was some excellent infrastructure that was built in Huntsville as a result of the G8.

1740

Speaking of Huntsville—I'm going to be here until 9:30 this evening—I was kindly invited to go to the inaugural meeting of the new Huntsville council, but as we're sitting till 9:30 this evening, I will unfortunately not be able to attend. I'm sure the Speaker will give me a little leeway here: I just want to congratulate the newly elected mayor of Huntsville, Scott Aitchison. He had a tough race. There were some very good competitors. He was just sworn in today, and tonight is the first council meeting in Huntsville, which I was invited to. I'm hoping that in the intercession I'll be able to get around to some of the council meetings around Parry Sound–Muskoka: Graydon Smith, the existing mayor of Bracebridge; Bob Young, who was acclaimed in Lake of Bays; Don Furnis, the newly elected mayor of the township of Muskoka Lakes; Paisley Donaldson in Gravenhurst; Larry Braid, who was re-elected in Georgian Bay township in Muskoka; and on the Parry Sound side of the riding, a huge change in the elected municipal representatives. I'm looking forward, in the intercession, to getting to as many of those council meetings as possible.

As I mentioned, in terms of court security, especially in Parry Sound, it is very different, where you have small arenas with just a community room. As the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane pointed out, it is very different, so in this bill, there might need to be some considerations made for that type of courthouse. It's not your traditional courthouse; it's an arena that's used as a courthouse.

Getting back to the part of this bill that deals with electricity generating stations and nuclear generating stations, looking at the recent activities in Ottawa that I've already talked about, post-9/11, the era we now live in, a nuclear generating station is certainly a likely target of a terrorist attack. I think we should be doing what we can to provide security at a nuclear generating station.

On the topic of nuclear, I would like to say that I think our party, in the last election, was the only complete supporter of nuclear generation in the province. As Mr. Yakubski, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the former energy critic, pointed out, if you look at what is actually generated, last year I think pretty much 60% of the energy in the province was generated by nuclear power. I sometimes see the opposition to nuclear power and wonder why there is so much opposition when we've had a terrific safety record in the province of Ontario.

In a day when we are concerned about greenhouse gas emissions and global warming, I would have thought we should all be very supportive of nuclear power. Other than the building of the facilities, there are really no greenhouse gases once it is operating. It has proven to be very reliable, and it provides the sort of baseload power that is so critical. Mind you, we have all had briefings

from nuclear operators talking to us about how, in the world of the Green Energy Act, they have had to do things they never dreamed of doing with nuclear generating stations: trying to reduce capacity when wind power comes on or when solar power is being generated and trying to manage the power that's being generated in ways that they're not designed to do.

I think, in our province, we could be making much better use and looking to the future, and nuclear energy should be a big part of it. Of course, we heard from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke; he may be a little biased because he has Chalk River in his riding. But I think he certainly recognizes just how important nuclear generation is as well.

In wrapping up, in summarizing this bill, essentially we have the three parts of the bill: the repeal of the Public Works Protection Act, amendments to the Police Services Act, and then also the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act.

We've been supportive of this. I think I missed the point that this is straightforward legislation that addresses the recommendations by former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry. That was, of course, in the wake of the G20 fiasco.

I do think, though, that the third party has raised some reasonable concerns, and I hope that the government takes the time at committee to be open to suggestions to maybe how you address those small rural courtrooms, for example, and others that I may not have thought about. It has been pointed out that there are good ideas on all sides of this Legislature. It's my hope that the government actually listens to members from all parties.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up and thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 35.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Once again, it's a great honour to be able to stand in this chamber and speak on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Windsor–Tecumseh and to make comments on the comments made just now by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. The member spoke about the Auditor General's report and the cost of security at the Pan/Parapan Games that we're all looking forward to next year in Toronto.

It reminded me about last year's Auditor General's report, when she talked about the issues at Ontario's nuclear power plants. One of the findings of the Auditor General last year was that, despite the need for security at nuclear power facilities in Ontario, very few of the senior administrators who required a security clearance had ever even applied for one, and very few of the people who did apply for security clearance at Ontario's nuclear facilities bothered to renew it once it had expired. I find that interesting because there's nothing in this bill that would say, "Let's do something about it."

Even more surprising to me in the Auditor General's report of last year was that, in case of a meltdown at an Ontario nuclear facility, there aren't enough people who know what to do in the case of an emergency. Yet there's nothing in this bill that says, "Let's spend some more

money and let's boost the number of people who know exactly what to do in case of an emergency at a nuclear power facility in the province of Ontario."

There are things in this bill that could be improved, Speaker, and I know members of this government are looking forward to enhancing it after listening to the members of the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Our government is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all Ontarians, and this legislation is a vital step in that direction.

On October 30, the minister of public safety reintroduced this bill. Mr. Speaker, this bill has been introduced three times. This bill has been debated. This bill has been consulted on. Many, many people gave their opinion on the bill. I know that the MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke would like this bill to be passed. We know that we had a lot of input from the MPP from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

We know that we have two reports. We have a report from the Ombudsman in December 2010. The Ombudsman produced a report that raised important questions about the PWPA. This bill was passed in 1939 in the context of World War II. So it's about time that we modify and modernize this bill.

In response to the Ombudsman, we asked the Honourable Roy McMurtry, former chief justice, to review the legislation. The former chief justice gave us very good recommendations—not just why we need to amend the bill, but good recommendations to modernize this bill.

1750

We have already had more than 19 hours of debate. More than 15 MPPs have spoken on the bill. It's about time that this bill goes for third reading, and the bill should be passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: It was a valuable presentation by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

It has been said that this bill has been debated several times over as Bill 35, aka Bill 51, aka Bill 34, and I still don't think we have it right.

André Marin indicated that the intent of the legislation was to protect infrastructure, not to provide security to people during events. My question: Are we working on a way to provide security for people who attend these kinds of events? What were those 1,000 people doing there? Should they have been there? Were they putting themselves at risk? There have been so many instances that I have personally observed, here and elsewhere, where people, including myself, probably should have been detained for our own health and safety, when I think about it.

So my question is, what is the alternative when things really get out of control, when there are thousands and thousands of people at an event that's late at night, with younger people?

Infrastructure: We focus on courthouses and electrical generating stations, as we should. What about oil

refineries? What about oil pipelines? What about natural gas pipelines? What about water pipelines? What about our banking system—electronic sabotage that could occur, not necessarily back in 1939, but during times of war, to really do damage to a country, if you disrupt their banking system, their system of money, their stock market?

I really wish we could get up to date with some of this legislation. It's almost like we're still stuck in 1939.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I think this is the fourth or fifth time I've had the privilege to speak today on this particular bill.

I want to talk to the last speaker from the opposition, when they talked about the 19 hours that they had to debate the bill. Well, one of the fundamental rights that we have in this province and this country is that we have the right to protest. You can imagine: Just for protesting, you're thrown in jail for a lot longer than 19 hours—not charged, nothing; just thrown in a cell.

This past week, with my colleague from Windsor West—we toured a jail in Niagara. I can tell you, it's not a place that I think anybody in this room would want to go. I'm sure that, on that particular day, none of those young people who ended up in jail for a number of hours—and some for days—wanted to spend it in jail. I think that goes without saying. Because I protest, I end up in jail.

What this bill does—it talks about the very thing that I'm talking about again. Bill 35 repeals the Public Works Protection Act and it amends the Police Services Act. It would repeal the Public Works Protection Act, the legislation that was used to search citizens near the security fence during the G20.

Again, I've talked about it with untrained private security officers, but one of the things that I find—I like to read language—is "search, without warrant" and "use reasonable force if necessary". Maybe somebody in this House can explain what reasonable force is. Is reasonable force punching somebody in the head, kicking them in the groin? Is it grabbing them by the arm? Just exactly what is "reasonable force" in that language?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Well, that concludes our time for questions and comments. But before I go back to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, I want to remind all members that questions and comments are intended to relate back to the member who has given the speech. The questions and comments are to relate to the member's speech, not to just generalize the debate and continue it in two-minute segments. So I'll remind the members of the House of that.

I'll return to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who talked about the Pan/Parapan Am Games and the report done by the Auditor General, which of course demonstrated how the security cost of the Pan/Parapan games is going from \$121.9 million to \$247.4 million, and who

knows? It may be higher than that. I'm just amazed that the budget could be so far off. But we've certainly seen that in the past as well.

And the Attorney General, who had some suggestions for improvement and actually talked a bit about the Ombudsman report. Of course, the Ombudsman report was called Caught in the Act. It had to do with the Public Works Protection Act and the G20. He stated that "Regulation 233/10, passed to enhance security during the G20 summit, should never have been enacted. It was likely unconstitutional. The effect of regulation 233/10, now expired, was to infringe on freedom of expression in ways that do not seem justifiable in a free and democratic society." It was, of course, the cabinet of the government that enacted that regulation.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk raised questions of security, many other different questions about security, pipelines, etc.

And the member from Niagara Falls, again talked about the G20 and just tried to bring the perspective of the people who actually were directly affected by this regulation and what they had to deal with.

So I thank all members for their comments and for the opportunity to speak today to Bill 35.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 6:45 p.m.

The House recessed from 1757 to 1845.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
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**Journal
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Monday 1 December 2014

Lundi 1^{er} décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} décembre 2014

The House recessed from 1757 to 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 1, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / *Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 35, the official opposition had the floor, so I look to the New Democrats. I see the member from Timmins–James Bay and recognize him.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, where I come from, when they say “G35,” people yell “Bingo!”

Mr. John Vanthof: Especially at this time of the evening.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Especially at this time of night: “Bingo!”

I want to deal with this bill, but I want to deal first of all with the fact that we’re sitting at night and the government has served us with a time-allocation motion in regard to G35. Here we are again.

I’m going to repeat what we’ve said earlier in debate, and that is that there are a number of bills that the government has on the order paper. A lot of those bills we probably would not be debating in this House for very long if we were able to actually do what the government said that they wanted to do at the beginning of the session, and that is, the government said that they were interested in moving some of their bills forward, and came to the opposition and said, to both the Tory House leader and myself, “How can we make things go through the House and make things work out generally?” We had

said that we need some time in committee in order to travel some of this stuff—not all of it. If we can do that, then we can probably come to an agreement.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that there used to be a time in this House that there was no such thing as time allocation. In those days, the government used to introduce bills. They used to sit down with the opposition. They would negotiate which bills went to committee and which ones stayed at second reading for any length of time etc. As a result, a lot of the bills that were before the House didn’t spend a long time in the House at second reading and spent hardly any time at third reading, because there was an agreement among the House leaders: “Here are the bills that we’re going to debate with a bit of meat on them”—those we would debate; those were the ones chosen by the opposition. Other ones like this went through the House with not a heck of a lot of debate.

The government has got this particular bill. Some of the stuff in this bill, they will argue, is non-controversial. I will argue that there are actually a couple of controversial parts in this bill. The government is essentially forcing the opposition to debate everything ad infinitum because they’re time-allocating absolutely every piece of legislation on the order paper which they want to be able to move through this House.

I will say to the members in this House, especially the newly elected members, that your House leader and your Premier—more importantly, your Premier—are not doing you any favours, first of all by bringing you here on Monday night at 6:30 to sit in the House in evening sittings, let alone to be in a situation where we’re debating all of these bills because the government refuses to make any kind of agreement on the passage of bills through this House as far as how long at second reading and how much time in committee. So we will have these debates.

To the bill: There are a couple of things that I want to say. What really troubles me in this bill is not so much that the government is trying to do this; it’s that they’re delegating their authority to do it all to cabinet.

If you look at this particular bill, it is essentially a bill that’s made up of three schedules. They repeal the Public Works Protection Act—fair enough; we all know that that’s about the incident we had here in Toronto some years ago in regard to what happened with the G7. Then there’s schedule 2, which amends the Police Services Act, again in relationship to that and to courts, and schedule 3, which deals with generating facilities.

In both schedule 2 and schedule 3, the government is saying the following: “The new section 142 confers on

the Lieutenant Governor in Council the power to make regulations governing the exercise of the section 138 powers." The problem with that is that for all of the stuff that we talk about here, rather than pointing out in legislation what it is that we want to do, we're saying, "Generally this is what we want, and we'll leave it to cabinet to make all of the decisions about what that should be." That's not a good idea, Mr. Speaker, because what this Legislature is doing is giving away its legislative authority on what it is the government is going to do on these two particular issues.

1850

A good example of that falls under the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act. The government, in that bill, is saying that they are going to be able to make regulation as to the powers of search and as to which facilities fall under the auspices of this act, all by way of regulation. Generally, it's understood that what they're trying to protect is nuclear facilities—and rightfully so. I think there's a good argument to be made that in nuclear facilities, we should have a fair degree of security when it comes to who enters and who exits those facilities, for common-sense security reasons. I think both sides of this House are prepared to have that discussion because that's a fair question for the government to raise in this day of global terrorism and everything that we see going on in the world, and in the days of what we saw, unfortunately, in Ottawa two or three weeks ago, where an individual who was unhappy about something decided to run into the House of Commons with a gun and shoot at people and killed a person on the cenotaph. It tells us that these kinds of incidents are becoming more and more, unfortunately, the reality of our society.

I think it's right for a government to say that we should be having some form of security at nuclear facilities so that the security forces there have a little bit more authority in being able to do their jobs about assessing what the risk is and trying to secure those facilities by controlling the people who are able to get into those nuclear facilities.

There's a solar plant being built in my riding. There are solar plants all over this province being built—rightfully so; not a bad idea. But the government, by order in council, can decide to make a solar plant a place that's protected under this legislation. Who here in this House believes for one second that there's a risk for a person to walk in and visit a solar plant? First of all, they're not secured, other than having a fence around them. Most people see these things on the highway or on the rural road as they're driving through Ontario. Under this particular act, the government could—by way of the regulation it's giving itself to cabinet; the delegated authority of this Legislature—say that a solar plant is subject to the security provisions of schedule 3 of this bill. Does anybody in this House believe that should be the case? I don't think so. I bet you that if I were to put it to a vote right now, nobody in this House would say that a solar plant or a wind farm or a hydro generating facility should

be treated with the same type of security that a nuclear facility is.

If you read the act, the government is delegating the authority of this Legislature to allow cabinet to decide which type of facilities are protected with the provisions in this legislation when it comes to security: the power to search, the power to seize and the power to arrest. Really? We're going to potentially have a cabinet deciding that, "We can do that at a solar plant; we can do that at a hydro facility; we can do that at a wind farm; we can do that at a non-utility generator, in the same way that we do at a nuclear plant"? That's why delegation of authority is a bad idea. I don't believe anybody in this House believes for one second that we should confer the same type of security measures on those types of facilities compared to what we have at nuclear plants. But that's what the government is doing.

You'll hear me get up in this House quite often and say that it is a bad idea for this Legislature to delegate their authority to cabinet when it comes to the making of regulations because, the minute you do that, it means to say that this Legislature has essentially dealt itself out of any decision about what should happen with its own legislation. I think this is a slippery slope of, essentially, having laws made at cabinet, where there's really no public scrutiny, other than: Something is gazetted at the end of the process when the regulation is made.

I think that's a problem, which brings me to the second point, which is: If we're going to do that, which I argue we shouldn't, there should be a more stringent process when it comes to the review of regulations. Currently, at regs and private bills, as we call it—regulations and private bills committee—a member has certain minimal rights to review regulation, but those rights are very limited.

You have got to remember, that standing order was written at a time when we didn't delegate authority to cabinet. When I first came here in 1990 we didn't automatically delegate to cabinet these types of powers. We would spell it out on the legislation, and it would say, "The minister shall," and, "The minister will" do the following things.

My good friend the member from York Centre would know—he was here before me—that in fact we didn't delegate our authority to cabinet the way that we do today. The reason we used to write legislation in the way of saying, "The minister shall," or, "The minister will," was because we wanted to ensure ourselves as a Legislature that the government of the day, whoever it might be—NDP, Conservative or Liberal—did what they were supposed to do as decided by the House by way of legislation. We very seldom delegated the entire guts of the bill to regulation.

At the time that the standing order was written around review of regulations at the regulation and private bills committee, it was a time when there wasn't a lot of regulation being dealt with in the way that it is now.

Here we are, almost—well, I wouldn't say "almost"; pretty well every piece of legislation that comes through

this House now, we're delegating the entire authority of the bill to cabinet to do what it wants. Once you've passed the bill, this Legislature has nothing to do unless it decides to pass a second bill to amend or to revoke it. But it's the government that controls the agenda of the House. Only the government can move a motion in the House. So it really makes this assembly quite powerless when it comes to being able to affect this once the decision is done.

I think we need to look, in this Legislature, as members, at extending the rights of members to review regulation. Here's what I would like to see. First of all, we know that all regulations are currently gazetted. That means that as soon as a regulation is approved by cabinet, before it goes into effect it has to go into the Ontario Gazette so that people are able to see it for a period. Depending on the legislation, it determines how long.

Why don't we have a situation where, in fact, if government is going to make regulation, the regulation should come back to committee in some way related to a bill? If the government passes this bill and they write the regulation—there should be some mechanism to bring the regulations from that bill back to the committee so that the committee can at least look at it and, at least at that point, there would be some public scrutiny as to what the government decided to do with its powers at the cabinet when it comes to making regulation.

The committee can pronounce and, at the end of the day, the government could ignore it, but at least the alarm bells would be sounded and those people who are stakeholders to the particular regulation would at least have an opportunity to shed light on what the government is doing so that we can hold the government to account.

Some would argue that that's a pretty extraordinary power for a committee, and I understand that argument. But the point is: If the government knows it's not going to get caught, it's going to do things. A good example of that is what happened with the gas plants, Ornge, eHealth and what's going on with MaRS etc. It's a question that governments do things because they think they're without impunity at one point.

In this day and age of technology and where we delegate all our authority from the Legislature to the cabinet, there needs to be some kind of mechanism by which members of this House and the public, more importantly, have an opportunity to be able to look at new regulation and pronounce itself as to: Does it make sense and is it a problem, or is it bad thing or a good thing? That would be one thing that you could do.

The other thing you can do—or both—is that you could extend the powers of the committee to be able to call particular regulations to the committee. Considering that almost everything is done by regulation and that there's far more regulation out there created by cabinet than there is legislation—as you well know, Mr. Speaker, there's like a printing press of regulations in the cabinet office that spews out regulations ad infinitum. But the point is that at least members of this House from both sides, government or opposition, should have the ability

to say, "Here's something that I've seen that's coming down the pike. This is a problem. I want to call that particular group of regulations before the committee to be able to review."

If you do second reading, committee, third reading, the bill is done, they go off to regulation and there's some sort of vetting process that is automatic, then, at the very least you should give the members the ability to call that before a committee.

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Governments aren't going to like that; I understand that. The Liberal government is going to say, "Oh, this is a bad idea," because the last thing they want is more transparency and accountability and openness in what government is doing. Oh yes, the Premier speaks a good line—she is open; she is transparent; she is different; she's a breath of fresh air. But as I close my eyes and I listen to what she's saying, she's using the same language as Dalton McGuinty. There's really no difference with this new Liberal administration and the older Liberal administration when it comes to their practices when it comes to transparency and accountability. You can say it all you want. You can try to say that it isn't so. But the test is what you do with your legislative agenda and what the government does when it comes to their actions when it comes to regulation.

Again, I say: The delegation of authority from this Legislature by way of regulation on a bill to cabinet in the way that we're doing it now is a bad idea, and it's certainly not transparent. If you read the bill—I'll just read you one section to give you an example. It says: "The new section 139 sets out offences and the new subsection 138(2) provides a power to arrest a person committing any of the offences, without warrant and using reasonable force if necessary." It goes on to talk about the fines. All of it is delegated to cabinet as far as enactment and how it's going to work. If cabinet decides it wants to do something different than what we decided in this House, they've got a pretty good amount of latitude to be able to make that happen, and I think that's a really, really bad idea.

I want to speak about courts from the perspective of local communities. We have courts set up across this province for a good reason: so that people can have access to justice. Recently we learned that in the town of Hearst, the local judge, Judge Boucher out of Kapuskasing, decided that he was going to shut down court services in Hearst. For Judge Boucher, I guess that's great because he doesn't have to drive the hour and 10 minutes up to Hearst to do court whenever he does it. But for the rest of the OPP in Hearst, for the citizens of Constance Lake in Hearst, it's not a good thing, because it means to say that everybody has got to go meet with Judge Boucher down in Kapuskasing rather than doing court hearings in the town of Hearst. We just learned this by way of a letter from Judge Boucher about a week ago.

I just want to put this House on notice: This is a really bad idea. They're saying that the reason they've got to shut down the court—and the reason is not a bad one.

They're saying that it's because the court hearings are taking place at Place des Arts, where we now have a French public school that has classes there. Okay, fair enough; you don't want kids intermixed with what's going on at a court. Who knows what's going through that court on that particular day? So I think there are some logical arguments that the judge puts forward. But certainly to God the town of Hearst is big enough and has enough facilities that we can move the court to some other location in Hearst so that the people of Hearst could be served when it comes to court services in their community.

Je te dis que le maire, M. Sigouin, puis les conseillers de la municipalité, ne sont pas bien, bien contents. Ils se regardent, avec ces décisions-là, puis ils se disent : « Quoi? Nous autres à Hearst, on est de deuxième classe ou de troisième classe? » À la fin de la journée, c'est important que le monde dans nos communautés ait les services qui sont nécessaires. Puis je peux vous dire que le ministre et moi, on va avoir des discussions cette semaine faisant affaire avec cette décision. C'est quelque chose que je suis sûr qu'on peut contourner. Je suis sûr qu'on est capable de changer la direction, mais ça va prendre un peu de vouloir de la part de la province à dire : « On va prendre notre responsabilité envers les citoyens de Hearst et faire sûr qu'en effet, on a des services dans cette communauté qui sont nécessaires. »

I've only got a couple of minutes. The other thing I just want to touch on very, very quickly is the powers—it really bothers me. We're going to give security guards—in some cases, they may not even be properly trained—the ability to make judgment calls about, “Should I arrest somebody? Should I refuse them access? Should I search their person? Should I search their vehicle?” Those are pretty serious powers in a society such as ours.

We have a society in which we have certain rights and freedoms that we're accustomed to, and when we start drafting legislation such as this that confers the power of how this bill is going to work when it comes to search and seizure to cabinet, I would much, much rather that we be in a situation where, in fact, this Legislature spells out clearly who it is that can do this and in what conditions and what situations they're able to do these kinds of things.

We all agree: At a nuclear facility or a court, there has to have security. We get that. But to give blanket authority for people to make these kinds of decisions with—

Hon. David Zimmer: Blah, blah, blah.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There goes the “blah, blah, blah.” The guy who is a lawyer, the minister of Indian affairs, who probably would like to be the Attorney General, says, “Blah, blah, blah.” I would think that somebody in your profession would be a little bit more interested in those particular powers.

Mr. Mike Colle: More articulate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But he was very articulate in his “blah, blah, blah,” I must say.

I'd just say that that is a bit of a scary thought: that we delegate those kinds of authority to cabinet. For those people who don't get it, I think that's even sorer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? I'll remind members that the questions and comments should relate to the remarks that were just presented to the House by the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 35. I want to remind the member from Timmins–James Bay that the approved amendments before us have been brought forth by the standing committee. This is the third time this bill has been before this House and also gone through the committee.

Unlike the previous PWSA, the proposed act, if passed, would cover a limited list of infrastructure. I know the member from Timmins–James Bay has listed all the concerns about the infrastructure. The very key piece here is that the list of infrastructure is limited, and any additional critical infrastructure list would require an amendment to the statute, as opposed to regulation. I want to make sure that's clear.

The process of changing the statute is very transparent and open. There was some criticism from the members opposite saying that it has not been transparent and not been open. We are making this process more transparent, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to remind the members of the House that this is now the third time that this bill has been reintroduced to the House. The fact is that we have a dutiful responsibility to address the concerns raised by Mr. Justice McMurtry and others.

At the end of the day, I know everybody agrees in this House that we need to ensure the security for nuclear facilities, courthouses and critical infrastructure. We can debate this whole bill for the next two years, but I think that at the end of the day, we are here as elected officials to make sure that all infrastructure—especially the critical infrastructure—is protected at all times.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to start off by saying that the member from Timmins–James Bay, I think, brought up a very important point, and that is to delegate a lot of authority just to cabinet. We were elected to come here and set the rules and regulations, to define the rules and regulations, and ensure that we're bringing the feedback of all constituents that we represent. I'm a little concerned about the slippery slope we're going down of delegating all of that authority to cabinet.

We've seen what happens when that has happened in the past under this government and we don't get the full information provided to us. We've been trying, for many months—almost a couple of years now—at committee to try to get them to allow certain people to come and testify—Laura Miller and Peter Faist—and they denied that.

They're time-allocating a lot of things. Now they're giving even more power to just cabinet—not that cabinets don't have a role to play, but at the end of the day, I think we ought to be very cautious about giving that much power, that doesn't come in front of us as duly

elected legislators—and have the ability to represent the views of my constituents and what they've shared with me.

I think when I go more specifically to some of the pieces of the bill, the proposed changes would ensure court security guards have the powers to require all those entering a courthouse to show identification, provide a reason for being there, subject themselves to search, and, if deemed necessary, allow security officers to search the vehicle they arrived in, without a warrant.

Again, we have to do our best to ensure that the public is safe in our public facilities. I think this is very important. Having worked in a nuclear generating facility before, I think that it's very critical that you're monitoring who is coming in and out of a facility such as that and, at the end of the day, ensuring that the safety of the masses is protected, to the best of our ability.

I'm pleased to see that they've watered down a few of the elements from before. They gave too much power, I think, in the past to cabinet or the Premier to just appoint ad hoc groups. I don't think that has worked well for us. We need to ensure that this legislation will allow information to come in front of all of us so we can have proper debate, not time-allocated debate, and have proper due diligence given to it. That way, we'll make the best legislation possible for the people whom we're given the privilege to serve.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was quite interesting to listen to my colleague from Timmins—James Bay.

Basically, the bill has many parts to it. Some of the parts make sense, and we can see that it would be a step forward to have them come into place; some of the other parts of the bill, not so much. We will be confronted with this bill with many heads—a beast with many heads—some of them friendly and some of them not so much. The part that I find the hardest to support has to do with how much power we delegate to cabinet. We were elected. We are the leadership of our province—all 107 of us together. We represent the leadership of every part of Ontario. When we are together, we make decisions for this province, not delegate it to a few from the same party to change everything.

The other part of the bill that causes us grief has to do with court security. It is so important. The court system is a fundamental pillar of a duly elected democracy. When you add barriers for people to participate in the judicial process, those barriers go against the values that we have of a well-functioning democracy. To give power to a contracted-out security person who probably doesn't speak French or doesn't care about learning and then give him or her all of the powers to search and ask questions—I have problems with this, and a lot of the people I represent have problems with this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I listened attentively to the member from Timmins—James Bay. He made some very good

points. I didn't agree with all of them, but I think he's trying to put some thoughts before us that are worth considering.

Just to know that this bill has gone through André Marin, the Ombudsman; it has gone through a special report by the Honourable Roy McMurtry; it has been before this House three times. It is about a complicated issue but an issue where we need to take some immediate action because there is a serious concern about security. If you want to see about the security of this province in our courts, you go up to the North York court—I think it's the busiest court in Canada—you can see what our judges, lawyers and police officers are faced with on a daily basis. It's kind of daunting to see what they go through.

In terms of my constituents in Toronto, what they are unable to understand is: How did they ever get this G20 here in Toronto? Nobody wanted it. I know that Toronto city council said, "We don't want them to come"; they were supposed to be in Muskoka, I think, originally. Then, all of a sudden, we ended up with an army of police officers; we had our city closed down for about a month. I know that a lot of shopkeepers lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue because there was such fear and loathing around Toronto that people were afraid to shop. They never were compensated. The police officers were put between a rock and a hard place. At the beginning they said that the police weren't tough enough; then they said they were too tough. So everybody lost, and we spent a lot of money because the Ottawa government didn't listen to the people in Toronto who said that they didn't want the thing here in the first place. So here we are still trying to deal with this mess created by the government in Ottawa that never listens to anybody.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Timmins—James Bay for his reply.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I will continue to raise the issue of delegating authority to cabinet because I think it is a real problem. We have moved from one extreme to the other, and delegating the authority of this Legislature to the cabinet is a real, real problem. We are essentially dealing ourselves out, as a Legislature, about what the final outcome of a bill should look like. I used in this House, not too long ago, the example of the Conservatives when they were in power when it came to casinos. The NDP government had introduced casinos in the province of Ontario. Mr. Harris at the time, who was the third party leader, was opposed to that. So he promised that there would no new casinos unless there was a referendum. To his credit, he brought legislation to the House and said, "There will be a referendum should there be a casino put in any community." Then he delegated all the gist of the bill to regulation. Guess what Mr. McGuinty did when he came to power? He eliminated the need to have a referendum in order to establish a casino in a community, which was completely opposite to what this Legislature had decided. We had decided in this House that if there was going to be a casino, there had to be a local

referendum. Because we delegated the authority of that act to cabinet, a future government, this time a Liberal government under Mr. McGuinty, decided to do completely the opposite to what this House pronounced itself on.

So why would we as the Legislature delegate our authority to cabinet on matters of public importance? I would much rather we have a bill that's drafted and says, "The minister shall," or, "The minister will." Then at least there's a clear understanding of what it is that we're doing with the legislation and there's not as much of a danger for governments in the future, without coming to this House, doing things that quite frankly are contrary to what this House decided.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No further debate, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT (MAKING
ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFER), 2014
LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE TRANSPORT (ACCROÎTRE LA
SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE EN ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When Bill 31 was last debated by this House, the official opposition had the floor. So I'll look to the New Democrats: Further debate? The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to evening sittings, where I have the privilege of competing for airtime on the TV with Monday night football and a whole other bunch of entertaining shows that are on tonight.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Everybody is watching you.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I know. Everybody is watching me. You know what? Tonight, at the bingo hall, they would say that this would be "G-31." Between G35

we're almost close to a couple more bills tonight. You guys are good for a one-liner.

Good evening. It's actually the first time that I am sitting at evening meetings. It's always a pleasure to speak on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin, first and foremost, but also as the critic for transportation for the NDP.

My colleague has left me some very valuable tools. I hope everybody can sit back and enjoy the entertaining discussions that we're going to have on An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act. That's a mouthful.

The Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act is better known as the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act. I am going to talk about some of the positive attributes of Bill 31.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Hear, hear.

Mr. Michael Mantha: There are some positives, but in every bill there is a poison pill, and there is a poison pill in this one.

There are, of course, flaws and causes for concern in the lines of this omnibus bill that I will share with you as well. Many stakeholders have shared their thoughts with me. I have constituents, and I would like to share these opinions and concerns with you today. So sit back; we have an hour. I invite you to make yourself comfortable. Settle in and fasten your seatbelt. Here we go. Enjoy the ride.

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"An act to make Ontario's roads safer" is a good name for this bill—another bill by this government with a really positive title, a good-natured title that doesn't shed light on some of the hidden agendas included in Bill 31. But let's put the brakes on the surprise element of this positively titled bill and talk first about some of the value added to Ontario roads by Bill 31.

The intent of this bill is positive in nature. Thanks to the hard work of my colleagues Jonah Schein and Cheri DiNovo, this bill addresses many long-standing concerns that our party has continued to raise regarding safety and cycling and automobile uses.

Bill 31 aims to improve road safety by addressing issues of impaired and distracted driving with a new segment addressing the impact of drugged driving in our communities. The bill includes provisions to enhance cyclist and pedestrian safety and provides more emphasis on enforcing the rules of the road. We would agree that these goals, if approached correctly, are what we all want for Ontarians.

Road user safety is my primary concern, and distracted driving is an issue at the forefront of keeping our roads safe. Driving requires your full attention at all times. Distracted driving takes you away from the primary task at hand. Distracted drivers are just as impaired as drunk drivers.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to share a story with you. Travelling in from Algoma-Manitoulin, particularly from

Elliot Lake, I travel the road twice a week. I leave home on Sunday nights and drive back Thursday nights. Depending on how late we're going to be this Thursday, it might be Friday morning by the time I go back home. I can almost tell you for certain that when I come up behind a vehicle or even a transport, without even looking at that driver I can tell you if he's being distracted, either by using something inside of his cab—a person using their telephone. You can tell just by following these individuals because they're basically all over the road and you see that sudden movement of getting back in line or you see that telltale story, particularly at night, where there's a gleam or there's a glow inside of the vehicle. You see it happen very often.

It still astonishes me that people continue to do that. They read their articles. They'll watch a movie while they're driving down the street or just trying to get from one place to another.

How one can take the time to actually observe and concentrate and focus on what is in front of them—it's one second, and you're up on somebody's bumper; you're in somebody's ditch; there's an animal that has crossed the road; there's maybe a pedestrian walking on the side of the road. It's that easy, Mr. Speaker; it happens that fast.

I've travelled those roads many times. Just for instance, you sit down; you're driving; you're trying to concentrate, and all of a sudden, your phone rings. You're thinking about your phone ringing—"Who is calling?"—and you're trying to correct your driving. You're changing lanes, and you're thinking about your phone. Your phone is ringing: "Who is calling me?"

There's a transport you just turned over. The transport is coming in, but your phone is still ringing. All of a sudden, you decide to reach for your phone. You can't reach and grab your phone. Guess what? You are now taking your eyes off what you should be paying attention to in front of you, to look for your phone, and by the time your eyes get back up, it's too late. You've just caused a major accident.

That happens time and time again, Mr. Speaker, and we still see it happening. Every one of us in this room: We've seen it happen.

Do we bother to roll down our window and tell that individual who is driving beside us, "Hey, put it down"? Have you caught yourself sitting at a red light, looking at your BlackBerry? The red light goes green, and you know what? You hear that horn behind you. You're not paying attention. You give it that gas. How many times have you been caught?

It just got really quiet in here.

It happens that quickly. We all need to look at our own practices. We all need to look at what family members do. We all have it in ourselves to correct this type of action.

In our world, the scenario just described is so common. It happens all the time. In fact, it's so common that eight out of 10 drivers are distracted. Studies show that a distracted driver is a factor in eight out of 10—about four million—car crashes in North America each year.

Drivers talking on cellphones, in many cases, are just as impaired as drunk drivers, and experienced drivers are no better at handling the distraction of a cell than novice drivers. Alberta Transportation research shows that distracted drivers are three times more likely to be in a car crash than attentive drivers.

According to the CAA, drivers engaged specifically in text messaging on a cellular phone are 23 times more likely to be involved in a car crash, or a near crash event, compared with non-distracted drivers.

The RCMP's statistics show that in 2010, distracted driving was a contributing factor in 104 collision fatalities in British Columbia.

In Ontario, the OPP says that distracted driving has become the number one killer on Ontario roads. OPP statistics say that 78 people died in distracted-driving-related collisions in 2013, compared with 57 impaired-driving deaths and 44 speeding-related deaths.

Distracted driving is everywhere. It doesn't matter how many years of experience you have behind the wheel. We all are affected by distracted driving behaviours. This bill is a chance—Ontario's chance—to lead the way with progressive legislation and proper education to bring awareness to the safety issues and work towards safer roads in Ontario.

The bill includes stiffer penalties for distracted driving. It prohibits display screens and hand-held devices, specifically computers and TVs in cars. Who knew that all this time, I could have been writing speeches and catching up on episodes of *The Simpsons* while I drive up every week from Elliot Lake?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The Simpsons?

Mr. Michael Mantha: No.

The legislated fines for distracted driving currently range from \$60 to \$500. With the proposed legislation, the fines will range from \$300 to \$1,000. If \$1,000 doesn't curb my urge to watch *Homer*, I don't know what will, Mr. Speaker. But it has been a long time that we've had this coming.

The increasing of fines is not being done with the goal to take more from Ontarians. We know collecting fines isn't going so well for the government right now anyway. We'll get to that in a couple of minutes. But increasing the fines for distracted driving will create a warning of serious repercussions to the wallet. Hopefully, this increase in penalties, and possible financial losses, will serve as a deterrent for Ontarians.

What I don't see in Bill 31, that I would like to see, is a section on including a distracted driving prohibition under the graduated licensing system. This means that when Ontarians first get their driver's licence, just like we have rules about not driving between certain hours with a G1 or about zero alcohol tolerance for drivers under the age of 21, we should also include in the graduated licensing system specific rules about distracted driving as part of our provincial campaign to really hammer home the dangers and repercussions of distracted driving.

By including regulations regarding distracted driving in the graduated licensing system, we have the oppor-

tunity to set up new drivers with good and safe habits from the beginning and in their driving careers. Including distracted driving in the graduated licensing system is an amendment to Bill 31 that I would really like to see.

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Moving on, I want to talk about a particular part. I'm glad that my friend the Minister of Transportation is here, because I took the time to speak to him this afternoon about this particular issue, and I'm just happy that he's here. I want to jump ahead in this particular bill: "Current section 191.8 of the Act authorizes municipalities to permit and regulate the operation of off-road vehicles with three or more wheels and low pressure bearing tires. The section is amended to remove the requirement that the vehicles have low pressure bearing tires.

"Current section 199.1 of the Act deals with vehicles classified as irreparable...."

Okay, it goes on.

I am more interested in that particular clause. My good friend here, the member for Parry Sound—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Michael Mantha: — Parry Sound–Muskoka, as well as my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane, along with my friend from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and the minister—we are all on the same page in regard to hopefully what I understand this is actually going to accomplish. I was pleased to have the discussion with the minister this afternoon that this is basic housecleaning—cleaning up some legislation—that will permit, or eventually permit, the introduction of legislation that will permit the use of UTV vehicles on roads that are being utilized presently by ATV club enthusiasts.

I take this opportunity to read out a petition that we talked about on this. Just for the record, the petition reads:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

My understanding is that the particular change that is in this bill is housecleaning that will permit us to get to that next stage.

Let me try to give you the impact of these changes and what they mean to communities across Algoma–Manitoulin and, frankly, across northern Ontario, and how

they will benefit these communities. The tourism industry in northern Ontario is one that is fragile. There have been many reasons why it has become fragile. Irregular snowfalls—sorry, I shouldn't say that, but in the last couple of years we've had some regular, good snowfalls, which have actually increased the snowmobiling tourism activities that have gone out through our communities. But during the summertime, what has been challenging for some of these ATV clubs is that people have moved over from ATVs to UTVs.

There are interconnecting trails between many communities across my riding. You can basically leave Elliot Lake, get into Chapleau, do a loop in through Hornepayne, go up to Hearst, come through Manitouwadge, cut across and you'll be in Dubreuilville, and then back up in Wawa and work your way through the loop.

There are challenges to the ATV clubs. Let's not kid ourselves. There is still access to crown lands that some of these ATV clubs are finding very challenging because roads are being closed by the MNR. That's another issue we will deal with on another day. That is a very serious matter that is taking away road-based tourism from a lot of these communities.

But if you look at some of the opportunities that are there, these are individuals who, particularly when they travel as a group—you never have one or two. You're always looking at groups ranging anywhere between eight and 15, sometimes 20, machines. Some of the side-by-sides are four-seaters; some of them are two-seaters. So if you do the math, you're looking at about 40 to sometimes 60 individuals who are going to come to your community. They're coming to your community for quite a few reasons: (1) They're coming there for gas; (2) They're coming there in order to eat food; (3) They're coming there to spend the evening; and (4) They're coming there to buy whatever is in your community.

These are the economic engines that we have in small communities like Dubreuilville, Wawa, Chapleau, across the North Shore, Hornepayne, Manitouwadge—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Gogama.

Mr. Michael Mantha: —oh, and in my hometown of Gogama—that's right. Merci, France Gélinas. The member from Nickel Belt just reminded me.

These are the engines that we need in Foleyet and Timmins. This is what connects northern Ontario. These back roads are our playgrounds. This is where we work and we play. But it's also where we actually make our livings, which is why it is so important to see this amendment—and again, I want to give kudos to the minister. We did have a good discussion about this.

I'm expecting some follow-up from the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who will continue to work with both myself and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka so that we can make sure we have these amendments and this change to regulation—I want to say it right—316/03, just to make sure that all the ATV clubs and all the ATV enthusiasts have the opportunity to expand their clubs, to expand their trail systems, and to really benefit from this. Really, it's a social activity. It has blossomed into a definite family opportunity for

spending some time and really enjoying what we have in northern Ontario, the beauties that we have, the lakes, the hills. It's an opportunity for all of us to really engage in an activity and spend good-quality time together.

I'm looking forward to seeing this housecleaning as a first step. It's a positive step in the right direction to getting it done.

Puis ça ne serait pas complet sans que je n'envoie un petit mot de cœur à mes collègues et puis au beau BigDan Vallières de Dubreuilville, sans que je ne lui dise un petit mot : merci, BigDan, pour m'avoir envoyé le message sur Facebook l'autre jour. Je veux te laisser savoir que oui, notre parti, le NDP, avec mes collègues à travers du Parti conservateur et puis les libéraux, on va faire certain que les changements qui sont nécessaires pour que les gens qui ont les « ATVs » participent, se promènent, puissent partager, puissent se rendre au lac et puissent utiliser leur « UTV », pour faire certain que eux autres aussi ont les bénéfices, les chances économiques à développer dans les communautés, et puis que les gens, les clubs, puissent avoir les bénéfices d'utiliser les « trails ».

Comme j'ai dit, c'est tout le temps un plaisir que nous—quand on parle du nord de l'Ontario, nos chemins, nos bois, nos forêts, nos lacs, c'est là où on s'amuse. C'est là où on s'amuse, c'est là où on travaille.

Il y a beaucoup de problèmes qu'on a encore à adresser, même avec les amunémentes, parce que même si on fait les changements qui sont nécessaires ici, il faut encore qu'on regarde à l'accès aux chemins du bois. Ça, c'est un autre problème qu'on a présentement. Ce n'est pas ce qui est adressé à travers ce projet de loi-ci. On va essayer de l'adresser d'une différente façon à un autre temps à travers un autre projet de loi ou un autre changement de gouvernement, où les gens sont « restrictés », en effet, des accès aux lacs qu'on a en Ontario, où on a tout le temps été à la pêche ou on a tout le temps été prendre une marche dans le bois ou on a tout le temps été avec nos amis, soit en motoneige, soit sur le quatre-roues, soit avec le « UTV ». Ça, c'est un autre problème pour un autre jour.

Mais d'après ce que je comprends, ça me fait plaisir. J'ai eu la discussion avec le ministre cet après-midi, et ceci est une étape à nettoyer le projet ou la législation pour avoir la législation nécessaire pour qu'on puisse ouvrir et puis que les « UTVs » aient accès, comme les « ATVs » ont accès, aux chemins. Je voulais juste laisser savoir ça à mon beau BigDan. La prochaine fois que je monte à Dubreuilville on s'en rejersera.

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There are many good aspects of this—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Hear, hear.

Mr. Michael Mantha: No, there are, and I'm not saying that sarcastically. There are some really good ones. But there is one particular one that I'd like to shed some light on, which is—if I can find it—where are you? Oh, there it is: the vehicle inspection centre system.

The act says that this will allow “the Minister of Transportation to make transition regulations to facilitate the implementation of the vehicle inspection centre system.”

Under new regulations, “the minister may establish a program for the inspection of vehicles and the issuance of certificates and stickers and other types of proof of inspection”—I need my glasses; that's pretty bad—“and may appoint a director of vehicle inspection standards to administer the program. The minister may”—again—“enter into agreements with service providers to assist in operating the program. The minister may”—again—“also enter into agreements to authorize persons to operate vehicle inspection centres and to authorize service providers to enter into such agreements.”

“The director of vehicle inspection standards is given broad authority to issue directives governing certificates, inspection procedures and requirements and equipment and performance standards under section 100.7.”

My problem with that is my recent experience that I've been having along the North Shore, particularly in Algoma-Manitowlin. It's creating another agency, which is typical of what has been happening with the TSSA.

This afternoon, I heard my colleague talking in regard to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure on the creation of the college of training.

Again, you're looking at what was, at the time, back in the early 2000s, or in 1999 to 2001, when the Conservative government created this entity and the various powers that it has been granted. Only now are we seeing the impacts of those powers that have been granted to them, and the challenges that many of the small owner-operator businesses across my riding, particularly in the delivery of fuels, are feeling.

I have to say, it's not all negative. It has taken the last year and a half, almost two years, and I have to say that my staff, Grant Buck over in Elliot Lake, along with a fabulous lady who has been assisting my office, whose name is Cindy Vanier, have been assisting the various business owners across the North Shore, particularly on St. Joseph Island, in Desbarats and up to Chapleau. What we've been trying to do is work with compliance issues in order for these mom-and-pop operations to continue. Again, for the fragile state of our economy in northern Ontario it's important to have these gas stations open. It ties directly to what I was talking about earlier: the benefits of making that amendment for the ATVs and the UTVs in northern Ontario.

What's happening is, you're creating a body which will not be overseen, which will not be accountable to this government, and there will be transparency issues—and, by the looks of it, it will not be overseen by the Ombudsman. It will not be a crown agency, which will limit the oversight that this government will have. What that does is, it creates another blockage that businesses will actually suffer.

What has been happening is now—it was developed 10 years ago, but for whatever reason northern Ontario was left out of the loop. What's happening is that over the last two years, an overzealous agency has been plummeting and inspecting and getting back to a lot of these business owners and issuing compliance orders. Nobody

doesn't want to comply; everybody wants to comply with the environment. There is not one business owner, whether it's from Sault Ste. Marie, across to Sudbury, all the way up to Wawa, Hornepayne, Manitouwadge—they all want to comply.

However, northern Ontario is in a different situation. I'll explain to you why, Mr. Speaker. We do not have access to the volumes of sales that are generated in other areas. What we rely on is our tourism industry, when they do come in. What we rely on is those two or three months in the wintertime when there are family Ski-Doo activities that are happening that come through our community. What we do rely on is when those groups of ATVs and UTVs come through our communities. That's where we make our sales. But we also make our sales where—the community members rely on what we have in our community.

Creating this vehicle inspection centre will generate more problems for some of these agencies, because there is going to be a lack of accountability and oversight. When you don't have oversight, you're going to get into problems. Creating another bureaucracy and another level of non-transparency for some of the businesses across my particular riding of Algoma-Manitoulin is not something that we would like to see in this province at this point in time.

I look to the government and I hope—I see these words, as far as “may establish” and “the minister may enter into agreements.” I hope he looks at that seriously and looks at what has happened with the College of Trades, that he takes from that example and he speaks to the member from Sault Ste. Marie in regard to the discussions that we've had recently in regard to the TSSA.

I don't want to stand here and say it's all bad. We've corrected a lot of the problems that we were having within those businesses, and we're actually working on a plan where we're going to be moving forward, where some of those gas stations that had been closed, we're going to be looking at an action plan to reopen them, possibly, provided that they're in compliance, provided that there is no environmental impact and provided that they have all the safety mechanisms that they need in place. But we're going to develop it with a northern Ontario perspective, keeping in consideration the inspections and the compliance issues that are required, keeping in mind that with the resources that are available in northern Ontario, it's sometimes anywhere between six and 18 months that you're waiting for these services in order to just get cathodic testing for your pump lines. The available individuals who can do that testing are from southern Ontario, and most of the time there is a six- to 12- to 18-month waiting period. When you keep getting individuals to come back to that place, and telling them, “You didn't comply”—“Well, you knew I didn't comply. We just explained to you what the challenges were.” Getting another order and penalizing those owners repetitively, knowing that information is there and the challenges that they have, is not going to be good for them. I would certainly like the minister to follow up and have discussions

with the member from Sault Ste. Marie so that we all understand the challenges that are there when we do create these agencies that are at arm's length to the government and the challenges that are there in doing so.
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Bill 34 from the 40th Parliament is included in its entirety in Bill 31, and specifically discusses the collection of monies owed to the province in unpaid fines for parking infractions, photo radar system violations, red-light camera violations and speeding tickets. Currently, the province has over \$1 billion that stands to be collected in total across the province. This bill will include the amendments initially stipulated in Bill 34 to make changes to section 69 of the Provincial Offences Act. The changes allow the province to deny licence plate issuance or renewals to people with outstanding fines for traffic offences until they are paid. The bill will also support municipalities in their ability to enforce the collection of monies owed under the Provincial Offences Act. It will help make it easier for municipalities to collect millions of dollars owed by bad drivers across the province.

A lot of money has been pending for years, but there are also a lot of new infractions and tickets issued as cities continue to grow. Leeds-Grenville has lost somewhere in the range of \$6 million to \$7 million in revenue for uncollected Provincial Offences Act fines accumulated over the past 10 to 15 years; Sault Ste. Marie has lost up to \$12 million.

In 2001, the money that the province hadn't collected—when they downloaded fine collections to municipalities, they downloaded all of the arrears as well—all of the debt to the municipalities. When this was downloaded onto them, not only was the collection services downloaded onto them, the accrued debt that was there at that time was also passed on to the municipalities.

Licence plate denial has been undisputed as a very effective tool to compel payment of certain fines and obligations. It is currently used in very limited circumstances and is restricted to the enforcement of unpaid parking tickets, unpaid red-light camera fines, and Highway 407 ETR tolls, fees and interest. That's right: The private toll highway has the ability to deny licence plates by the municipality, but the municipalities are restricted.

The reasons for such an astronomical amount of fines to be unpaid by citizens and uncollected for traffic infractions are complex.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's pretty ridiculous, huh?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, it is.

They can be summarized as a lack of resources dedicated to fine collection and enforcement, coupled with the lack of effective collection tools to enforce court orders. Currently, the main issues around fine collection are the lack of coordination within the government and the need for operational changes to better align the authority of municipalities with their responsibilities.

On the first point, the lack of coordination within the government: the Ministry of the Attorney General is unconcerned with the matter of monies owed. Its primary interest is the administration of justice, but most Provin-

cial Offences Act penalties are, in fact, financial. The purpose of using financial penalties was to ensure the efficiency of the administrative and legal system. The Attorney General's system does not allow for cross-referencing with the Ministry of Transportation, which means that unpaid Provincial Offences Act fines cannot be easily tied to the Ministry of Transportation system. Reports stipulate that even in the case of Ontario drivers, ministries don't share information, which makes fine collection difficult.

On the second point, the need for operational changes: Municipalities need more tools—I think we were all lobbied by OGRA, I think it was last week, who were asking for more municipal tools to assist in collecting unpaid fines. The Ontario government needs to work with municipalities to make this collection possible.

This bill is a good first step in streamlining the process and giving municipalities more clarity. However, it will not resolve all issues relating to fine collection. North Bay has come up with a successful solution for their municipality by hiring a collections clerk who will consistently remind people of their overdue Provincial Offences Act fines. This is one way of getting the job done.

When the province offloads such a big task, with all of the arrears, the province also needs to ensure that the municipalities are properly supported to accomplish this task. Some 91% of the infractions come from Ontario drivers, but our systems are not connected to each other. Tell me, how does the province intend to rectify that?

The bill also includes provisions to deal with out-of-province drivers who have accumulated tickets in Ontario but have yet to pay them. The bill adds a section that outlines a process of issuing tickets to out-of-province drivers which would be similar to issuing tickets for regular Ontario drivers. Traffic enforcement would be provided the ability to properly ticket out-of-province drivers. What we need is a system that will also ensure that out-of-province drivers are held responsible for their infractions. We need to see a system of enforcement in Bill 31.

Let's go back to Highway 407. Let me give you an historical refresher.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Everything that's wrong, blame it on the Tories.

Mr. Michael Mantha: You were doing fine. You were being quiet. You were listening.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's just a delight being in here for night sittings. It's nice to see that everybody is so engaged in this discussion.

Highway 407: The toll highway opened in 1997. In 1999, in order to address an \$11-billion deficit, the PC government leased the highway for 99 years to a private operator in exchange for \$3.1—\$3.1 million or billion? I think that's billion. Yes, \$3.1 billion. In 2013, the 407 ETR reported revenues of \$801.2 million, and earnings, before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization, of \$664.8 million.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A good deal if you can get it.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes.

In 2012, as part of the budget bill, the government enacted the Highway 407 East Act to govern the eastern extension of the 407, which is currently under construction. The new public 407 east toll highway will be a P3, public-private partnership, operated and maintained for 30 years mostly by the same private companies that run the 407 ETR. Under the agreement between the government and the private operator of the 407 ETR, the registrar of motor vehicles is required to deny licence plate renewals after being notified by the 407 ETR that a driver has not paid their bill. The government has been very quick to afford a private corporation the necessary tools to enforce the collection of fines but has been very slow to provide municipalities with the necessary tools to enforce collection of fines.

The 407 ETR charges annual compounded interest rates of over 25%. The collection tactics of the 407 ETR operators have recently become more ruthless. They have fought controversial court battles seeking the right to collect 15-year-old invoices from drivers, including the legally bankrupt, while charging exorbitant compounded interest rates. In some cases, these drivers may have long since forgotten their invoice, assuming they even received it, and are shocked when their licence plate renewal is suddenly denied by the government for failure to pay an old toll bill that may have ballooned to 30 times the amount of the original invoice after interest is added on. The 407 ETR operators are fighting an Ontario Court of Appeal ruling from late December 2013 that says the 407 ETR cannot require the provincial government to deny plate renewals to those who have gone through bankruptcy proceedings. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear the appeal, and the case goes before the court likely in January 2015.

In November 2014, the Superior Court ruled that the statute of limitations for collecting an unpaid toll bill applies only after the registrar of motor vehicles has been notified. This allows the 407 ETR the option of delaying notification while interest charges pile up. Under legislation, the 407 ETR may notify the registrar after a bill has been unpaid for 90 days, but it is not obliged to.

In some cases, the toll charges are mistaken and were incurred by long-dead parents and ex-spouses. My colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has an elderly constituent who is facing astronomical charges from the 407 ETR bill because her son registered a car in her name. She doesn't even have a driver's licence. She is already struggling to make ends meet, and now she has the stress of a massive bill.

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The 407 ETR admits that it once practised bill suppression—stopping the sending of bills after three months—only to track down the driver years later with a whopping bill with piled-on compounded interest. They claim that the practice changed in 2010 after a series of scathing articles in the *Toronto Star* and that the 407 ETR sends out bills at least once a year to whatever address they may have, or not, on file. “We want to collect tolls, not interest,” said the ETR spokesperson. However, in

November 2010, the Star reported that, “Tales of woe are still arriving that make it clear the 407 continues to hold back bills and let the interest run up before sending out an invoice.”

When the Highway 407 East Act was enacted in 2012 as part of the budget bill, the NDP demanded amendments that required the registrar of motor vehicles to notify drivers via registered mail or bonded courier that their plate renewal was about to be denied. This was to guarantee proper notification in cases where the 407 invoice had gone to the wrong address and had somehow been diverted from the true plate owner. Bill 31 removes this notification requirement. This is a very serious concern.

During the same budget negotiations in 2012, the NDP supported a Tory amendment that would require public consultation in the case of a 407 east toll increase. Bill 31 removes the public consultation requirement. This is also very serious. The MTO claims this will be replaced with a regulation calling for automatic inflationary increases, but the legislation allows the ministry to set whatever rate it wishes via regulation.

I hope that these issues will be addressed before third reading and that appropriate amendments will be made to Bill 31 to ensure that 407 ETR users are properly notified of their bills and that the public is properly consulted as well.

Now, I am running out of time here, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to talk about the cycling industry because there is great news for cycling, but there are a few things that I didn't see in here.

Actually, with the minister being here—I want to thank Mr. Patrick Gauthier from Manitouwadge, who sent me these pictures of Highway 614 leading into Manitouwadge. I'd like to have a page or somebody so I can have these pictures delivered to the minister, because I think the minister would be interested in seeing these.

It is something that is very concerning in northern communities, which is the state of our roads, the maintenance of our roads and just the lack of proper equipment that we have across northern Ontario. I am looking at those roads in those pictures, Minister, and quite frankly, I will be going up to that area this weekend, and for the purpose of optics, I will be strapping on a pair of skates and I'll be skating down the middle of that road just to let you know that these are the conditions that we have in northern Ontario. That is from this afternoon, Minister, and I am really glad that you took the time to look at those pictures, because when Patrick called my office this morning, he was very concerned, not only for himself but for his community members. I think you can see the one truck—where there was the rollover of a transport truck in the ditch. You can see the problems; there has been such a big buildup of ice on the road. There are two paths that are open with tires but the problem is that there is a thickness of ice that, once you start hitting that with your tires, it throws you from one side of the road to the other. It's no wonder that—I wasn't there and I don't have the police report, but it's

pretty evident from those pictures how challenging it was for that driver to maintain control and stay on the road.

Again, Minister, I want to let you know that myself and colleagues from Timmins–James Bay, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Nickel Belt, Thunder Bay–Superior North and across are going to continue bringing you those pictures and the faces and the voices and challenges that we're having in northern Ontario, because we haven't fixed it all. There have been some improvements, but there definitely is a lot of work to be done across northern Ontario when it comes to road maintenance. It's going to be a challenge for all of us to make sure that we can get to and from our activities, to and from work, to and from our medical appointments that we so desperately need, and make sure that where we need salt and where we need sand and where we need plows, those are going to be made available for communities across northern Ontario. We won't accept anything less, Minister. You're going to be hearing that message very loud and clear from myself and my colleagues. I look forward to working with you on these issues.

We need to make sure that the inspections that are required to dispatch the plows that are required on those roads, and the preventive work—we see some of these signs that are lacking within our health care system. When we look at health care, if we would put more emphasis on preventive measures, to prevent illnesses from happening, we could save ourselves millions of dollars. The same thing applies to transportation. We can come with better practices to make sure that where the snow falls, it will melt on our roads. Where the ice builds up, there are ways that we're going to be able to dispatch the teams and the equipment that are required across northern Ontario to make sure those roads are clear.

I'm looking forward to working with you on this file and making sure that not only throughout northern Ontario but across this province we have proper, good, safe travelling roads so we can get to and from—whether it's getting to school or getting your daughter to those piano lessons or getting your son to that hockey game, just making sure we have the ability to get to and from our activities.

I want to circle back to the good things that we have been doing, particularly in my riding, when it comes to—

Hon. Dipika Damerla: You're stereotyping.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: You're stereotyping.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Just ignore them.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I like to have an engaging crowd. We're having good dialogue here, so we're doing fine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately—your remarks, of course, have to go through the Speaker. I would ask the government members to allow the member for Algoma–Manitoulin to make his speech without interruptions from heckling.

Mr. Michael Mantha: We're running out of time. You just took up some of my time, Mr. Speaker. These night sittings—we've got them on all week, right? And next week too?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: All right. That's perfect.

Let's move on to cycling and bicycle safety. At least one cycling fatality occurs every month in Ontario, and thousands more are injured each month. This is why improving cycling safety in our province is crucial. Increasing cycling across Ontario benefits us all, for environmental reasons, health reasons, economic reasons and congestion reasons. However, safety concerns remain one of the largest factors that prevent more Ontarians from getting on their bikes.

While this bill before us says that its aim is to improve road safety and specifically to improve cyclist and pedestrian safety, this aspect of the bill falls very short. In the one-metre rule, this bill introduced an important condition that would require drivers to give at least one metre of space when overtaking a cyclist. Motorists overtaking is a leading cause of car-bike collisions, and a one-metre rule is necessary to keep the roads safe for all users. This is something that we support and something that my colleague from Parkdale-High Park, NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo, has pushed this government to adopt for many years now.

Nova Scotia actually passed a bill that did exactly this over four years ago. At that time, 15 states in the US also had a comparable rule in place. Jurisdictions internationally, including Germany, France and Spain, have all had a one-metre rule in place for years, and we are glad to see that this government has finally decided to think about the safety of our cyclists and motorists by considering this provision.

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It's unfortunate, however, that they didn't listen much sooner. Dozens of lives could have been saved had this government acted when we were pushing for these changes years ago. A closer look reveals that the effects of this bill don't actually require cars overtaking cyclists to provide a distance of one metre. Instead, it states that drivers must allow a distance of one metre "as may be practicable." That's a hard word for a French guy.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Good effort.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you very much.

Enforcing this type of requirement, a one-metre distance for motorists overtaking a cyclist, is already very difficult to do in practice, which is why the condition includes, in this bill, "as may be practicable," making this requirement basically meaningless.

Another positive part of this bill was, unsurprisingly, first introduced by an NDP member. The provisions included in this bill that allow municipalities to create contraflow bike lanes, which help create safer and more direct routes for cyclists, was pushed by the former NDP MPP representing Davenport, Mr. Jonah Schein.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yeah, it was a great bill. It was. It's nice to see some of our ideas reflected in this bill. Sitting here as an opposition member with my colleagues from the NDP, it's nice to see that we actually are influencing change in the legislation of the day. It's

nice to see that we're actually accomplishing things, and it's also nice to see that our ideas are being used.

But at some point or another, you get tired of suggesting ideas. I'm looking forward to the day when I'm actually going to be sitting on the other side of the House. Instead of looking at the eagle telling you that you have to do your job and holding you vigilant, I will stand and look at the owl that's here and I will be wise in the decisions that I make and apply it to my everyday duties that I'm going to be having here at Queen's Park. That day will come.

Paved shoulders: I want to thank the group from Manitoulin Island, and also the member from Muskoka-Parry Sound—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Parry Sound-Muskoka, who introduced a private members' bill in our last sitting that required paved shoulders. I want to thank the group from Algoma-Manitoulin, particularly on Manitoulin Island, the MICA group. The cycling organization has lobbied the previous Minister of Transportation, and they were successful in getting some paved shoulders and roadways on Manitoulin Island. One of the biggest reasons why is that they were able to demonstrate how this would impact the communities, how it would connect, and how it was such a big economic engine for Manitoulin Island with the Chi-Cheemaun coming across from Tobermory into South Baymouth. We have hundreds, if not thousands, of cyclists that come onto Manitoulin Island now. Just in case you didn't know, Manitoulin Island is something that we should be talking about, not only as Ontarians, but throughout this country. Some of you might not know this, but did you know that Manitoulin Island is the world's largest freshwater island? Why is it that we don't have a strategy in this province promoting that in order to bring more people?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Why don't we have a provincial park on it?

Mr. Michael Mantha: We do. We actually have a couple of parks there. Come down to Misery Bay.

Interjection: Who named that, anyway?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm not sure, but it is such a gem.

Talking about paved shoulders and the work that my colleague did, it's something that we should be promoting. This is a gem that we have.

Also, just down from my riding I have a second island; it's called St. Joseph Island. The cycling group who are there are working in order to promote more of these healthy activities, which is cycling. I found out—I hope I give this justice—that there are such things as fat-bikes—I think that's what they're called. There are fatter tires on these bicycles, and they're actually now promoting more cycling during the winter months. The fatter tires give you better traction, and there are many trails and a lot of activity. So I was actually surprised when I sat down with them. I thought it was far-fetched, but there is a huge push and a lot of people are picking up this activity and this great sport. It's a healthy way of

spending a nice, warm winter afternoon across Algoma-Manitoulin.

So these strategies that we're looking at developing, not only on trails but also for the cycling world, who are able to use a lot of the roadways that exist there which connect these communities—and it goes back to what I was talking about earlier, the challenges that we have in making those changes that we need under the ATV/UTV regulation, making sure that our communities are connected so that the fragile economies in northern Ontario are interconnected so that the gas stations, the gift shops, the restaurants, the hotels and all other activities that are there—the local museums that are there—are actually benefiting from these great tourism activities through cycling, through ATVs, through Ski-Dooing. All of it is very much interconnected, and we need to make sure we have that ability in this bill of pushing these great activities going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very much running out of time and I'm not even close to finishing some of the comments that I wanted to make today. But as the new critic for transportation, I'm really pleased that the minister is here tonight during this late show. I want to let him know that my door is always open to him. I look forward to building a very healthy line of communication between both of our offices so that we can enhance, we can improve and we can benefit a lot more Ontarians in regards to how we're going to address the many challenges that we have. I know I've already started establishing that line of communication with him. I look forward to working with him.

I can't believe that an hour has flown by. I wish I would have another hour, because I have so much more to say. With that, on behalf of the people of Algoma-Manitoulin, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will bid you adieu.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member. There was a lot of applause here on this side of the House for that member's remarks. He spoke very eloquently for the better part of an hour here tonight. I found many things in his comments in the debate this evening very interesting to listen to, perhaps none more so than the geography lesson that he provided to some of our colleagues and the official opposition regarding the parks—in particular one, I understand, called Misery Bay. I think, Speaker, some days when I'm here in question period, I would recommend that many members of the official opposition would belong in a place known as Misery Bay.

But I also want to say to the member, who I understand from his remarks tonight is also the new transportation critic for that caucus, that I do look forward to working closely with him. He was very eloquent in his remarks tonight, and by and large supportive of the thrust of Bill 31, which is important because, of course, fundamentally, this is a bill that is designed to make sure that Ontario's roads remain amongst the safest in North America, as they have been consistently for the past 13 years or so.

Of course, understandably, the member had some questions and a desire to seek clarification around certain points. That's why it's important that after we move this bill through second reading—after plenty of debate, as there should be in this Legislature regarding something so important to the province—we get it to committee and can deal with it at committee. But I am encouraged to hear on this very important legislation, my very first bill as the Minister of Transportation, that the official transportation critic from the NDP caucus provided a lot of constructive feedback.

I look at my good friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, and of course one of my parliamentary assistants, the member from Cambridge, and I know that, with that kind of intervention from that member and from that caucus, we can work to make sure we achieve the outcomes we're looking for. When I think of the extraordinary work that my colleague the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell brought to bear with respect to some of the items that now appear in debate, I know that we're going to have a great time discussing this at committee, getting the bill passed, and making sure that our roads and highways remain very, very safe.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise and provide feedback for the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I was particularly interested in the fact that you highlighted the municipal engagement that is included in this bill. When John Oosterhof was the mayor of Grand Valley, he raised this issue with me a number of years ago. We tried to lobby the government, unsuccessfully at the time, to get them to assist municipalities in collecting unpaid fines, and ultimately it's great to see it incorporated into this government bill and potentially see it passed at some point in the near future.

In terms of my comments about provincial parks on Manitoulin Island, I must further clarify that there are, in fact, two provincial parks on Manitoulin Island, which, of course, the member would full well know. Oddly enough, the Liberals knew about the one in Misery Bay. The second, of course, is Strawberry Island. However, there are no provincial parks on Manitoulin Island that allow for camping. As an avid camper and someone who is always looking to enjoy the beautiful opportunities that are on Manitoulin, it is a great disappointment to me that there are no provincial parks that allow overnight camping.

So as a point of clarification, yes, in fact, there are two. I encourage all of the Liberals on the other side of the House to visit Misery Bay often when they want to—

Interjections.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Outside of question period, and, of course, while they're on Manitoulin Island, Strawberry Island as well. However, please keep in mind that you will need overnight accommodation elsewhere because neither of them provide the opportunity for camping on

site. Thank you very much, and it was a pleasure to listen to the hour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add my comments to Making Ontario's Roads Safer after my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin did such a brilliant exposé of this bill.

One part of the bill I would like to really focus on is, if we are going to make Ontario roads safer: Why not take this opportunity to regulate utility vehicles, the UTVs? Right now, ATVs are already regulated in Ontario, and it has been a success.

As Mr. Mantha said, it brings tourists to a lot of little communities in my riding. Nickel Belt has fantastic trails for ATVs. More and more you see UTVs, which, in my point of view, are safer. You sit side by side; they come with crash bars; they are a safer vehicle, but they are not regulated. So why not take this opportunity, while this bill is open, to make sure that we go a step further and regulate the UTVs so that they too are allowed to cross a road, they too are allowed to participate in those kilometres and kilometres of trails that you will find all over Nickel Belt. Whether you go from Shining Tree to Westree to Sultan to Gogama, Foleyet, Ivanhoe Lake—all of them have ATV trails. In and around Sudbury in my riding, as well, from Walden to the valley to Rayside-Balfour, to Falconbridge, they have fantastic trails.

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, Chelmsford also; it's part of Rayside-Balfour. But we don't have the regulations to be allowed to use them. Now is an opportunity. This bill is open. Let's do the right thing and regulate that.

I thank Michael, who is also my driver.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. He really did fill up that hour, and far more eloquently and it was far more entertaining than Monday Night Football. It is a Jets and Dolphins game tonight, though. I'll phrase it that way.

The other thing I wanted to mention, and I wanted a chance to say it while he was speaking, is that if he really wants a good shot of the owl, a good view, we've got some space. I'll help him carry his desk over. The only catch is that you'll have to hang out with us on Wednesday afternoons. I am not sure that he wants to do that.

But seriously, this bill is about public safety. I think if you listened to the remarks of the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and everybody else who spoke in the House, there are ideas from all over the House. If you take a look at the member from Scarborough-Rouge River—he introduced last year the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act, which was an act about distracted driving and increasing the penalties, adding demerit points and increasing the fines. That was something that led out of a tragedy in his community. Those are the kinds of things that we don't want to see.

In terms of cycling, the member from Parkdale-High Park, the member from Burlington and the member from

Parry Sound-Muskoka all put forward good, solid ideas about how we can promote and make cycling safer in our province.

I'd like to congratulate the minister on this bill. I think it's an important piece of legislation that will increase public safety. I am encouraged by the supportive remarks of members from all sides of the House. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for his reply.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Well, folks, that's all. I just wanted to reiterate: We did have a very healthy discussion in regard to the positives of this bill, but there are some negatives. We will certainly be looking at discussions about that going forward. You don't have my full support yet, and I want to be clear about that. We do have a lot of work to do with this, particularly with these vehicle inspection centre systems and the actual arm's-length organization of them and not having any oversight by this government. I have a big problem with that, with the experience that I've had recently in dealing with some matters. I think I articulated that quite well in my comments.

I want to thank the Minister of Transportation once again for being here tonight and listening to the debate.

My friend from Dufferin-Caledon, there are many camping places on Manitoulin Island. There are wonderful places. And you know what? They charge a very minimal fee for you to go in and enjoy it. Being here, working this overtime, I'm sure you have a couple of extra bucks that you can actually put in and maybe enjoy one of their gift shops that they have there.

Speaking about that, you all are invited to go down to Misery Bay. They have some fascinating trails out there, and some great activities, and also in Strawberry.

To the member from Nickel Belt, absolument, France, il faut qu'on travaille et qu'on continue à travailler et à garder la pression sur le gouvernement pour faire sûr que l'application et les changements à la législation sur les «ATVs» et les «UTVs» se fasse. Toi et moi, on connaît les bénéfices qui pourraient venir au Nord, dans nos communautés.

To the member for Ottawa South, I thank you very much for your comments. They were very well received. I am not going to go down that trail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I am pleased to recognize the member for Brampton-Springdale for her maiden speech in the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to address this House and my fellow colleagues for my inaugural speech. I am proud to be elected the member of provincial Parliament for the great riding of Brampton-Springdale, and of course I'm proud to be a part of team Wynne. I think we have a Premier who works hard for Ontarians and is committed to a balanced approach to best serve Ontarians. I am very proud to be a part of this team.

Speaker, my riding is located in the heart of Brampton, which includes neighbourhoods like Snelgrove and the villages of Heart Lake, Springdale, Sandringham, Madoc and Bramalea Woods.

I am preceded by the honourable Linda Jeffrey, who is now the mayor of Brampton. I want to thank Linda for all of her hard work as an honourable minister and the member for Brampton–Springdale. I also want to congratulate her, as today the city of Brampton did have their inaugural meeting and she is officially now the mayor of Brampton, or Her Worship.

I have taken the opportunity to offer my personal congratulations to all those who recently ran for public office in Brampton's municipal elections. As an MPP, I understand the hard work and dedication that goes into running for public office. More importantly, I recognize that these candidates put in hard work and are motivated by a desire to make a positive change in our community. I am looking forward to working with all of my local, provincial and federal counterparts to support the city of Brampton and to support the issues that matter to us as a province.

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More than 500,000 of us, people from all parts of the world and from every faith and culture, now call Brampton home, and that number is continuing to grow. Brampton is my home and has been my home for the last 18 years. I first moved to Brampton in 1996 with my family and have watched the community of Springdale develop around me. I have seen the Brampton Civic Hospital develop, local businesses flourish and families grow. New families and new settling families chose Brampton to make their home. Brampton is where I grew up. Whether it be shopping at Bramalea City Centre, skating at Gage Park or going to the Chinguacousy Wellness Centre, every corner of Brampton holds a special memory for me.

Before coming to Queen's Park, I am proud to say that I represented wards 9 and 10 in the city of Brampton as a school board trustee in the public board for the Peel District School Board. As a school board trustee, I saw first-hand some of the advantages of the investments the Liberal government has made in education over the last 10 to 12 years. I saw the great things we've done for our children and the foundation that we have set through programs like full-day kindergarten.

I truly did enjoy my time at the school board. The three and a half years that I spent at the school board were very, very special to me. It gave me an opportunity to learn and to grow as an individual. At this time, I want to thank all of my colleagues at the school board for their support. Walking into the school board, I was the youngest trustee there, and they welcomed me with open arms. They taught me everything I needed to know and they supported me. I want to thank the senior administration team at Peel, as well as all of my fellow trustees, especially somebody very special, Beryl Ford, who retired after 45 years of service to the Peel District School Board this year. She was a mentor for me and her way and her connection to the community was so special that only

Beryl could go about doing things the way she did. Now, I hope that I will have the same support from this House, coming in as the youngest member of provincial Parliament to Queen's Park.

My time at the school board taught me about the importance of grassroots politics. It also taught me about staying connected to your community. The school board taught you that you had a BlackBerry and a laptop and you had your community. So it was just you and them, and that is something that I can move forward with as an MPP because it has given me the ability to respond to the requests of my constituents, to work with my constituents and to really understand what's important to them.

Nothing is more important to people than their children and what happens in their children's lives. The school board, I think, was the perfect foundation for me to grow in my career, and I will always cherish the memories we had at the Peel District School Board and the experiences that I took away from there.

I would also like to mention a few other very special people. First, I want to talk about my parents, who have supported me throughout my whole political career, which I started four years ago. They have always been there. They've been my backbone and they've been the structure. They've given me the ability to move forward. Coming from a background and a culture into politics, they are more than supportive. They are the ones who have encouraged me and stood by me.

I also want to, again, acknowledge my colleagues at the board and the rest of my family—my cousins, my friends, who have been there for me through thick and thin, who have put up with my craziness, who have listened to me, all of them, and campaigned and knocked on doors and put tireless efforts into my campaign. They were all absolutely wonderful. Without them, I could not be here today. Without their encouragement, their support and their love, I could definitely not be here today. They made this campaign one of the best experiences possible. We worked together. We worked as a team. I always say that you are only as good as the community, the volunteers and the team that stands behind you. So thank you very much to my whole team. You guys are phenomenal. I've grown up around this team and they've supported me right through and through, from taking that first step as a school board trustee to taking the next step to run as the Liberal candidate from Brampton–Springdale.

We knocked on doors, we stood at GO stations in the morning, met with our commuters, visited seniors' clubs, sporting organizations and small businesses in our neighbourhood. From all of them, all I understood was that when they heard what we had to say, they believed in the Liberal plan, they believed in us. That's why Brampton–Springdale remains a Liberal riding.

My family has a special story. I come from a family of immigrants. My parents immigrated to Canada in the early 1970s. They built a home for themselves in Ontario. They worked hard, and they often tell their stories about working tirelessly to give my brother and I a better life

than they were used to. My father grew up without both his parents, so it was especially important for him to provide his kids with more and to give them the compassion, the relationship piece, that he didn't have. He had lost his parents at a very, very early age, and that's why he continued to support all of us.

Sorry; I'm going to go back. There's somebody else I want to thank in this House. It's the member for Mississauga—Erindale, for his support and his encouragement through the nomination process and through the election process. He has been a strong mentor and friend to me over the last few years, so I also wanted to acknowledge the member from Mississauga—Erindale.

My family came to this country in the early 1970s, and my parents worked hard to build this life for themselves. They worked two to three jobs. My dad says he did a little bit of everything; he had a licence in just about everything. As an immigrant family, that's what you do until you find your niche, until you find what's right for you.

What sparked my interest in politics was where my dad found his career. My father's commitment to community service and democracy sparked my interest in and love for the public service. His commitment to his constituents reminds me every day that leadership is about service, that politicians are there to serve the public.

This is how I got involved in politics at an early age. The exposure to politics was very important to me, as my dad was the first turbaned Sikh member of Parliament outside of India, elected in 1993 to the federal House of Commons. My early campaign experiences with him started at 12 years old when he ran his first nomination, and those experiences were priceless. I was taught to knock on doors at a very early age and say, "Hi. I'm here on behalf of..." From there, I went on to run his campaigns, to manage the campaigns, to build a strong volunteer base, to fundraise and do all sorts of things. Eventually, it came to a point where I decided that this was something that I wanted to do. I wanted to serve the public. I wanted to follow in his footsteps. That's what I'm going to do. My dad believed in an open-door policy. This is something else that I will continue to promote in my riding of Brampton—Springdale.

I now want to talk about our government's agenda and the speech from the throne. We're moving forward with our four-point economic plan to grow the economy and to create jobs.

First, we are investing in people's skills and talents. By investing in our people's skills and talents, we will prepare them for the economy of today and tomorrow.

In challenging economic times such as these, I fully believe that the role of government is to provide families with the opportunity to realize their full potential and to ensure their access to vital public services. I am pleased that our Liberal government's progress to date includes completing the rollout of full-day kindergarten, investing in child care modernization, and launching Experience Ontario, a nine-month paid community work and service program that allows high school graduates to gain

valuable work experience before they enrol in post-secondary education or choose their career path. Again, as a school board trustee, I see the value in this program because a lot of our youth don't know what direction they want to take. Because they can take advantage of programs like this, they're able to make better decisions for their future.

We are also extending the Ontario youth strategy, giving more young people the chance to gain a foothold in the job market, and developing a comprehensive labour market information strategy to help job seekers, students and their families make informed decisions about their education, training and careers. A renewed results-driven poverty reduction strategy aims to reduce the child poverty rate by 25%.

Speaker, the second priority is building modern infrastructure and transportation networks. This is one of the top issues that I hear about when I meet with my constituents. That's why I'm proud that our government is making nearly \$29 billion in dedicated funding available over the next 10 years for public transit, highways and other priority infrastructure projects across the province. It is investing \$2.5 billion in provincial highway and bridge projects this year alone. Through the government's Moving Ontario Forward plan, we are allocating up to \$15 billion right here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. We are going to invest \$11 billion over the next 10 years for elementary and secondary education infrastructure, and we will invest over \$11.4 billion in hospital capital grants over the next 10 years.

The third priority that I'm proud to be working with my colleagues on is to create a supportive and dynamic business climate. This is critical for a growing city like Brampton. By supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate, we will help small and medium-sized businesses grow and attract larger companies to invest and create skilled jobs in Ontario. Our industries are well positioned to take advantage of new opportunities. That's why we are investing \$2.5 billion in the Jobs and Prosperity Fund over the next 10 years, and introducing the Better Business Climate Act, which will ensure regulatory burdens are reduced and smarter regulatory practices are being adopted.

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We are continuing to pursue opportunities to unlock economic value from provincial assets such as General Motors shares, real estate properties and ongoing reviews of LCBO, OPG and Hydro One, led by the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets.

We are also developing our Going Global Trade Strategy, which is exemplified by the Premier's recent trade mission to China, which attracted nearly \$1 billion in new investments and will create more than 1,800 jobs in the province of Ontario.

We can also look at Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, which will create 30,000 jobs and has already helped 2,400 young people gain the benefit of on-the-job workplace experience. It's introducing them to employers and offering them a head start on their future careers. All

of these initiatives will help our businesses thrive and compete in an increasingly global network of private enterprise.

The fourth priority is to strengthen retirement income security for all Ontarians. By strengthening retirement income security for all Ontarians, we are ensuring that Ontarians are better able to enjoy their retirement years and helping Ontarians retire with dignity.

To be clear, Ontario's preferred solution remains an enhancement to the CPP. However, the cost of inaction is too high. That is why our government is taking the lead on introducing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, that will offer Ontarians a secure benefit for life. Ontario is committed to introducing pooled registered pension plans, PRPPs, which will offer employees and the self-employed a voluntary, low-cost, tax-assisted option to increase retirement savings.

The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is an investment in a secure retirement future. Study after study tells us that the current system for saving is not meeting the needs of the majority of Ontarians. Without action today, we face growing economic uncertainty in the future that threatens our economy and our business. The Premier is absolutely right: After years of contributing to the economy, Ontarians deserve a secure retirement. We have an economic imperative to act now. We are taking leadership and introducing a made-in-Ontario solution with the ORPP.

These actions, taken together, will grow the economy, protect revenue and create jobs, all of which are very important priorities for my constituents in Brampton-Springdale.

I also wish to specifically mention recent accomplishments in my riding. First, our government has made tremendous investments in transit, such as the Highway 410 extension. The government is continuing to improve the highway by widening it and adding HOV lanes from the 401 to Queen Street. We have invested roughly \$95 million in Züm, which is our rapid transit bus service in Brampton. We've invested millions of dollars in gas tax funding, which provides stable, predictable, long-term funding for both the city of Brampton and the region of Peel. Our government is working hard to transform the GO Transit network, which thousands of our residents use every day for both business and personal purposes.

I'm proud of our government's funding of the Brampton Civic Hospital and the redevelopment of the Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness, which I actually just last week had an opportunity to visit for an information session. We will be able to provide the relief that Brampton Civic needs with these services available.

Speaker, I'm particularly proud that our government has uploaded vital social services that the residents of Peel depend on. It means we're ensuring that Brampton and the region of Peel receive their fair share of funding. We are not downloading services, like the previous PC government.

In particular, the uploading of court security costs and the funding of children's mental health services have

been tremendously beneficial for my community, as has the insurance fraud reduction act and the stronger workplaces act. These are priorities that, again, we heard about at the door, and we are committed to continuing to work on them.

I also want to acknowledge how excited I am to be the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues. It has been an absolute honour and privilege to work with Minister MacCharles and our Liberal caucus, which has so many wonderful and talented women.

As a parliamentary assistant for women's issues, I will be engaged in outreach to diverse cultural communities to ensure that the work of the Ontario Women's Directorate reflects the diversity of the women in Ontario. I will also be working to support our government's efforts to end gender-based violence, with the goal of an Ontario where women are free from threat, fear or experience of violence. This will include working with women's groups, service providers, community leaders and other experts across Ontario, involving them in our government's efforts to change the attitudes that perpetuate gender violence and to improve supports to victims.

Speaker, I will also make it my mission to raise awareness about women's equality issues and to support the efforts of women's organizations and other partners to achieve gender equality in Ontario.

This is another issue that is very near and dear to my heart, as we've had a victim of domestic violence in our family. My cousin lost her daughter at the young age of 22 in North Carolina when her husband brutally murdered her.

Therefore, I think that we need to champion these issues. We need to build awareness. We need to work with women. We need to empower them so that they can come out and share their experiences and share their stories. It's so very important that everybody knows that they have the support that they need so that they can have a better life. I will continue to raise that awareness in my community and in communities across the province in working with Minister MacCharles.

Speaker, in closing, my constituents have entrusted me to work hard and to fight on their behalf for what's important to them, and I will do my very best. I am proud of my Premier and I am proud of our government's agenda to build Ontario up. I look forward to working with all members in this House to do the best that we can do for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It is an honour to respond with questions and comments to the member from Brampton-Springdale. I didn't actually know you were the youngest member of the Legislature, but, trust me, we age people very quickly here, so that will change. Congratulations.

As a Peel MPP myself, I'm sure there are a number of issues that we will be able to work together on. I'm sure there are one or two that we will not, but that's okay too.

Peel is somewhat unique. We have some very fast-growing communities. You would know this, of course,

as the member made reference to her time on the Peel school board. So she has probably a very good appreciation of those challenges, both on the social side in terms of developmental services for children in the school system, and I know—I hope I know—that she will fight hard for her residents in Peel. I am sure that we can work together on those issues.

In terms of your work as a parliamentary assistant, I am pleased to hear that you are working with Minister MacCharles. There are, obviously, some opportunities on that file, particularly in light of some pretty disturbing public things that have been happening and have been publicized in the last month. I hope that we can work together to bring that issue to the forefront and cast some light on it, so to speak.

Welcome to Brampton–Springdale. I look forward to working with you. All the best in your tenure here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed an honour to stand and welcome to the Legislature the newest and youngest member, from Brampton–Springdale. It was her inaugural address. I believe she did an excellent job of telling us who she is and where she's from.

She forgot one thing, though, Speaker, and that is the six degrees of separation we have in Windsor, because she has strong Windsor roots and connections.

In fact, as you know, I was elected in a by-election, and she told me she was in Windsor for the by-election. I knew she wasn't working for me, so I said, "What were you doing there?" She said, "Oh, I was working for my cousin. He was running against you." And I said, "I am so sorry I beat him." She said, "No, no. It was okay. It was a good fight." I said, "Yes, but I got 61% of the vote." She said, "No, no. He might run again, so you be careful." She has put me on notice that that might happen.

She was a school board trustee. My wife is a school board trustee, and has been for about 20 years. I'm just following in her footsteps.

You owe her a call, by the way.

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Ms. Catherine Fife: I know, I know.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: All right.

Although I'm not the oldest member in the House, I'm the oldest in my caucus. When I volunteered, for my friend from Algoma–Manitoulin, to run over to the Minister of Transportation to bring his photographs he had taken by a constituent today, I was having fun with the member from Ottawa South and others, who said, "You're the oldest page this Legislature has ever had." It doesn't matter. You want to do a good turn; you want to help somebody out, and there's always somebody who's going to let you know about it.

Seriously, to the member from Brampton–Springdale, you're doing a great job. I would have preferred to see a New Democrat in the riding, but you're there. We have four years together. You did an excellent job in your inaugural address.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm so proud to rise to commend my colleague the member from Brampton–Springdale for her maiden speech. It was very passionate and very personal in terms of what you've shared with this Legislature. I see the strong values from your family that have really forged you in terms of your work here in the Ontario Legislature. I think that those deep roots will serve you very well.

I know that you have the support of your community. I have attended the Rose Theatre in Brampton, where, at the United Achievers event, I saw you in action. The connection that you have with such a broad group of stakeholders in your community—there's a lot of respect there. I think that you can build on that in your work in the community.

I was really touched by your immigrant story. It's a story, of course, that I share as well. I came here in the 1970s with my family. I think that that immigrant story is a part of Ontario. It's part of our diversity. It's part of what makes us one Ontario and a strong community.

I'm also really very pleased that you are the voice that is standing with Minister MacCharles on behalf of women in this Legislature and the role that you play for all women in Ontario in terms of your work in the women's directorate. I know you've taken on extra duties as the deputy chair of our women's caucus.

I see that there's a burning passion there that it is connected to. The tragedy and the loss that your family experienced in terms of losing your relative to intimate partner violence; I would say that that, too, is part of those roots that will help to drive you forward.

My advice to you would be to continue to use that strong voice as you represent the people of Brampton–Springdale. I know that your tenure here will be long and successful. Congratulations on your maiden speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I too would like to stand and welcome the member from Brampton–Springdale. I did not know that you were the youngest—certainly maybe the newest, but not the youngest. Welcome. You are very mature for your age, young lady. It's a pleasure to serve here with you.

I like maiden speeches because what we get to see and hear is a little bit more about the personal side of each of the members. I believe all 107 of us come here with the exact same interest, and that is to serve the people who gave us the privilege and pleasure to be here. We may have different ideas on how to get to certain places; we might even voice them occasionally in this House. But at the end of the day, I think we're truly here to serve, and I believe you're doing a good job of that.

It's also good to have my good friend the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, Percy, who I would suggest is the oldest and wisest page we've probably had in this House. If you have a connection to him—I'm almost wondering if you probably didn't vote for Percy down there. It's a secret ballot, so I'm not going to put you on the spot for that. But how could you not vote for a guy like him?

You truly, I believe, have made your family proud. You are a role model for the immigrant population. You're a role model for women. You're a role model for young people. You're a role model to show anyone that if you put your heart and soul into it, you can be an achiever and you can do amazing things, even at a young age.

I think all of us—certainly I'll speak for me and my three years: It's a learning curve. There's lots of new stuff coming at us every day. It's a world that no one else can truly appreciate. I'm not even certain that our spouses and our families can truly appreciate the heart, soul and determination we have to put in every day just to do our job.

I credit you for doing that. I credit you for stepping up. I look forward to working with you in the future. I really wish you the best of success.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Brampton–Springdale for her reply.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you, everybody, for your kind words. I want to thank the member from Caledon and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh—if I could have voted, maybe I would have considered it, but I couldn't vote there; I was just visiting—and, of course, the honourable minister from Scarborough–Guildwood and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Thank you all for your welcoming remarks and for welcoming me with open arms. It's almost like going back home to Peel for a few minutes there, with all this love I'm feeling in the room right now.

I look forward, again, to working for my constituents. As I said earlier, leadership is about service. It's very important to me that I do a good job serving the constituents of Brampton–Springdale. I know that they have high hopes and high aspirations for me as an individual and for me as their representative. I will try my very best to bring their issues, to advocate for them, to bring their voices to the table and to make sure that what they're telling me is being heard here at the Legislature.

You sometimes may have different opinions, but I think that once you're elected, you become the voice of your community. It's very important that we remember we are not our own voice as much as we are their voice. We represent their interests. I will continue to try to represent those interests.

I come from a very diverse community, with different groups, different interests, and I have a full understanding that not everybody will be happy all of the time, but it's our job to try to make sure that a majority of the people are happy a majority of the time, and I will do that.

Thank you again for welcoming me with open arms.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bill Walker: I sat here all day, waiting for this. I came back just to hear this.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I can feel the love already, Mr. Speaker. Great.

Mr. Bill Walker: Look at how many on the other side came back just to hear you speak.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, they're all smiling too. I'll try to make this brief. As King Edward said to one of his many wives, I shan't keep you long. That's an old one.

It's an honour to rise today and add my thoughts on Bill 31, the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act, 2014.

My office had the opportunity to review the minister's comments from his second reading debate on November 27, 2014. I believe that for the most part, the minister had fair reasoning for many of the items included and inserted in Bill 31. He noted in his comments that “on average, one person is killed on our roads every 18 hours, and one person is injured every 8.1 minutes.” Those are very alarming numbers. They speak to the fact that despite all the warnings and all the technology that has gone into making our roads and automobiles safer, more still needs to be done.

Overall, I support this bill, as our caucus does. There are some changes that we would like to see made through amendments, and there are some ongoing issues affecting road safety, especially in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton. As we are all here to represent our own ridings as well as the province as a whole, I would like to see the minister address those in his first piece of legislation. I'm optimistic that this minister will listen to the concerns that I know he is hearing from MPPs from all sides of the House and all three parties.

First, I would like to speak briefly about some specific aspects of the bill that I support and I know would find support from my constituents in Sarnia–Lambton.

Distracted driving: For myself, I've heard a number of members speak about distracted driving. Travelling the 403 and the 401 to get here two or three times a week, I see it as well.

I can't believe, with the fines that are in place, how many people I still see, either in Sarnia, Petrolia or on the way here to Toronto, on their cellphones while they're driving and making turns. You would think the message has gotten through; obviously, it hasn't. If we have to do it through increased fines and enforcement, I support that 100%. I've got family that are in law enforcement, and they're supportive as well of this type of legislation.

There seems to be almost no time when you aren't accessible or being updated with information, and this includes while driving. There's no doubt in my mind that the use of hand-held devices, like smart phones, while driving is a huge distraction for drivers.

Later, I'm going to mention one of our former colleagues—I know he pushed this for a long time—John O'Toole, who was a long-time member for Durham.

Mr. Bill Walker: He's sadly missed.

Mr. Robert Bailey: We miss him sadly here.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm trying to keep his petitions going.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound continues to mention his name every day when he introduces a petition.

In the time it takes for a driver to complete the simple task of reading a text or a tweet, a vehicle travelling at normal speed on our busy highways can travel hundreds of metres. While this driver is reading that text, not only are their eyes not on the road, but their mind isn't on the task of driving. They're not processing any of that important data that it takes to drive a car in this high-technology era.

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As a province, we've had laws on the books prohibiting the use of hand-held devices since 2009. As I said, Mr. O'Toole, the former member from Durham, was a great promoter of that.

I know that somewhere in these remarks, it talks about it, but I was listening on the radio the other day. I think it was the CBC or Fox News; I don't know now. Anyway, they talked about an app that an individual in the United States has developed—and I don't know how it works, because I don't understand that technology—that will actually shut the cellphones and text machines so you can't receive while the vehicle is moving. I don't know how it works, but I know that if they can put a guy on the moon and put people around the world in these spacecraft, they can come up with an app that would disengage those telephones and those devices we have in our cars.

I know I have something in my car to do with—well, I can't upgrade the GPS while it's moving. You can't enter it. If we can do that with those types of devices that we have in our vehicles, I know we could do the same thing with cellphones. I would encourage the industry, before you have to do it through legislation, to do the right thing, get on board and let's make these things disabled.

Wouldn't it be nice to have an hour or two, while you drive to Queen's Park or somewhere in the province, where you weren't inundated with messages? If it's that important, pull over every once in a while and check it.

I was on the US highways just recently on a trip down south, and I noticed that they're starting to put places on the Interstate where you can pull off, check your email and make some phone calls. I think there are even charging stations there. I don't know; I didn't check one. Let's look at doing those kinds of things here in Ontario as well, and do everything we can to encourage people to leave these things alone.

I'm hopeful that Bill 31, through the increase of penalties for using hand-held devices while behind the wheel, to a maximum of \$1,000, will send that strong message to the driving public that this is a violation that the province takes very seriously.

To give you an idea of how this issue resonates with the constituents of my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, I'd like to read an email from one of my constituents, Mr. Rich McFadden, who lives in Port Lambton, Ontario, on the subject of distracted driving.

Mr. McFadden writes: "Hey, just heard on the radio that distracted driving is ranked the highest killer on the

roads today. Travelled the 402 in the last month and twice was almost run off the road by people texting. One was a young girl driving a van that swerved over to our lane, and the other was a trucker. I realize they are going to increase fines and possible lose demerit points (good but not far enough).

"My suggestion is to electronically block cellphone connections if the vehicle is running. A person would have to be so many feet from a vehicle to unblock a connection. This is an easy fix with electronic blocking. The cops can't be everywhere with all the people that have these devices.

"Just a thought."

Mr. Speaker, I'm hopeful that drivers in the province will take that personal responsibility to stop using hand-held devices while driving, but if they don't, it may be time for the Ministry of Transportation and others to take a look at the sort of prohibitive measures that Mr. McFadden is suggesting. That's something that I was talking about, that app that I know is available. I heard it talked about on the news media one day.

That brings me to my next point on Bill 31, and that's impaired driving. We must all agree that those impaired, whether from alcohol or drugs, should not be driving, period. The sad reality is that people continue to take this risk, despite the potential impacts and penalties.

The MTO has implemented some very serious consequences for those convicted of impaired driving. I'm sure that each member's constituency office hears regularly from constituents who are going through the ministry's Back on Track program or who are required to have an ignition interlock device installed in their car. The stories that these drivers often tell speak to the serious impact that having your licence taken away has on someone's lifestyle.

But driving in Ontario is not a right; it's a privilege. The sooner people stop taking risks with not only their own safety but with the safety of other drivers on the road, the better things will be in Ontario for all of us.

That being said, I am supportive of the measures in Bill 31 that will make it tougher on people who get behind the wheel while impaired, through either alcohol or drugs, including licence suspension or car impoundment for non-compliance with the ignition interlock program.

I would also like to briefly talk about the section of Bill 31 that will widen the scope of professionals who will report drivers to the MTO who they think could pose a risk to safety. I deal with a number of these individuals from time to time in my riding who have been disqualified and then it's very difficult to get their licence back.

Right now, doctors and optometrists have a duty to report to the MTO when one of their patients presents with symptoms or an ailment that they feel could negatively affect their ability to drive. This often leads to the patient receiving a surprise letter in the mail indicating that their licence has been suspended.

If the driver disagrees with this assessment or believes that an error has been made, it can take months—literally

months—to have a review of the decision completed by the MTO. This means that during that time, fully competent drivers can have their lives turned upside down, affecting their work careers or their ability to take care of themselves or their loved ones through running errands. For seniors, losing their licence can mean that they certainly lose their independence.

Before any change is made to expand the list of professionals that can send off reports to the MTO that may result in a licence suspension, the ministry and all of us need to have a long discussion with the drivers in this province who will be affected at some time. Taking away someone's driver's licence can have a dramatic impact on their livelihood. I'm concerned about that power being extended to professionals who may not have the full review of someone's medical history the same way that their doctor would.

Rather than increasing the scope of the medical review system, I would like to first see the MTO address the lengthy delays that drivers face when trying to have their medical suspension reviewed. No doubt, as the population continues to age in Ontario, this issue of medical suspensions will continue to grow. As the senior population grows—I'm moving closer to that myself every day—it is important that the MTO take the time now to make sure it has a system in place to deal with the growing number of suspensions and reviews.

There are a number of other points to Bill 31 that on the surface appear to address issues that would seem to make Ontario's roads safer. Considering that Bill 31 was given the short title of Making Ontario's Roads Safer, all the different facets of Bill 31, like distracted driving, bicycle safety and pedestrian safety, certainly give the Liberal government many different points to play up in the media releases and tweets.

I was, however, disappointed that within Bill 31 I did not find any mention of the need for the MTO to take greater steps to monitor and adequately maintain road conditions in Ontario. I know that many members of this Legislature have made requests to the ministry about how roads are maintained during winter months, and that's not just in southwestern Ontario but certainly in northern Ontario. Our northern colleagues have raised this issue many times in this House.

The Ministry of Transportation hosted a conference call earlier this year to speak to members and their offices about how to assess and respond to road conditions. Despite the concerns raised by members on the call about the road conditions in their ridings, the message that I heard from the MTO was that, in their opinion, everything was fine. I think many members in this Legislature who represent those areas found outside of the GTA would agree with me in saying that everything is not fine. The MTO, while doing a great job, could be doing much more.

For the purpose of this discussion on Bill 31, I'd like to highlight a persistent concern in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, and that's the maintenance and road conditions of Highway 402. I'd like to read into the record a letter

from the mayor of the town of Plympton-Wyoming, Mr. Lonny Napper. This letter was addressed to the Ministry of Transportation earlier this year and it's about the conditions of provincial roads in Sarnia-Lambton. Mr. Napper writes:

"I would like to bring to your attention the conditions of Highway 402 from mile marker 15 to 40. I and my fellow council members are very concerned for the safety of those driving through our municipality, as this stretch of road is not being maintained in a proper and timely manner. Highway 402 is a class 1 road and needs to be salted and brined prior to anticipated snowfalls. The material on this stretch of road is concrete and freezes more quickly than the rest of the stretch of road, which is constructed with asphalt.

"While it is understood that there may be vehicular accidents during storms, this stretch of Highway 402 has seen an increase in the number and severity of incidents. The most recent incident occurred on Tuesday, March 25, 2014. This incident was a multi-vehicle accident which included at least eight transport trucks, multiple vehicles and three fire trucks. Five Plympton-Wyoming firefighters—volunteers, I might add—"were injured in this accident.

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"From September 2013 to December 31, 2013, the Wyoming Fire Department was called to 14 motor-vehicle-collision calls on the eastbound/westbound 402 between mile markers 15 and 40. What is more, from January 2014 to March 25, 2014, the Wyoming Fire Department was called out to 21 motor vehicle collision calls on the eastbound/westbound 402 between mile markers 15 and 40.

"Therefore, just this winter season alone, the" same volunteer fire department "has been called out to 35 motor vehicle collision calls on the eastbound/westbound 402.... Most notably, on Feb. 27, 2014, a 37-vehicle collision occurred, which led to multiple injuries and two fatalities.

"Any number of accidents, injuries and fatalities is unacceptable. The stretch of Highway 402 between markers 15 and 40 needs to be maintained in a proper and timely manner. Why are crews not being deployed to this section of the 402 in a timely manner? This is particularly puzzling given that the MTO depot is located right in Reeves Corners and there is adequate warning through weather networks and in the media.

"On behalf of the town of Plympton-Wyoming, and on behalf of the individuals and families who have experienced an accident or loss on this stretch of Highway 402, I call upon the" ministry "to investigate this matter immediately, before another death or serious accident occurs."

Mr. Speaker, that was a letter submitted by Mr. Lonny Napper, the mayor of Plympton-Wyoming—a good friend of mine, as well. I have also joined Mr. Napper in meetings with officials from the MTO. At that time, they still maintained that they're doing everything that needs to be done on this stretch of provincial highway. For all

the good that Bill 31 may do to increase road safety in Ontario, the ministry is overlooking a huge opportunity to improve how they handle road maintenance.

Just before I wind up—I've got a few minutes here—I wanted to talk about some other messaging. Ontario Provincial Police cite distracted driving as a causal factor in 30% to 50% of collisions in Ontario. The highway traffic safety—80% of collisions and 65% of near crashes have come from some type of driver inattention. Under impaired driving, Ontario is one of only three jurisdictions in Canada that currently has no sanctions for drug-impaired driving. I was surprised at that. One of the most progressive and, I would think, educated provinces in Canada, and we haven't moved to that already—I'm surprised. I intend to follow up with our critic and with the minister on that.

MADD Canada estimates that just less than 50% of all fatal collisions involved drug and/or alcohol impairment. Our caucus supports tough measures and expanded education to ensure that those impaired are not operating vehicles on Ontario's roadways. Given that the government has not introduced scientific testing for drug impairment, we do require further detail as to how and when this would work.

I talked a little earlier about medical reports. While the medical licence review system is the bane of many constituency offices because we have a lot of issues with people who are trying to get their licence back and we have healthy, diligent drivers who are having their licences stripped away, the lack of accompanying details as to who the minister will be able to empower to report these medical conditions to is another issue.

I've got a few other issues here I'd like to get on the record as well. Another one is about this information. I was surprised at this because I ran into this myself the other day. Approximately 40% of recommended light vehicle maintenance repairs are postponed or abandoned altogether each year, and this poses significant risks to motorists on the road. Underperformed maintenance is valued at over \$14 billion. Of this amount, \$500 million in brake work is underperformed, and the average vehicle is undermaintained by \$600 every year.

I know about this for a fact because in my other vehicle, my wife's car, I had it in just to get an oil change and get it winterized, and they rotated the tires. When they took the tires off—and I had work done at another shop—they found out that they had the wrong type of brake pads. This is a number one shop, and they had installed—I don't understand it all—16-inch tires and they had 17, and then they put the wrong brake pads on. If I hadn't taken the car in to get the oil checked—they were hesitant to talk about another—but they put it in writing. So I went back there the other day, just before I came back here. I didn't make a big scene about it. I went in and talked quietly to the guy on the desk because there were other people in the waiting room. I said, "Look." And he said, "Oh, no problem. Bring it in Tuesday or Monday. We'll get right on it," and didn't argue about it at all. I said, "Look, I'm telling you what the other pro-

fessionals said they found." I had no argument. When I read that, it made me think about that: How many other people are driving around out there with poor brakes, no brakes or undermaintained? Like I said, this was a well-known shop in Ontario. Maybe a guy made a mistake; I don't know. But I know it does happen because it happened to me.

Under the new subsection 7(12.0.1) it provides that if a person is in default of payment of a fine imposed for traffic or parking offences, no permit held by the person shall be validated and no permit shall be issued. The municipalities will like that because it will get them some of the money back that they are owed for these traffic infractions.

I see I'm running down my time here. This is the other one that has to do with trailer lengths, on tractor-trailers. Currently the act allows certain prescribed combinations of vehicles to have a maximum length of 25 metres. The bill will be amended to allow a maximum of 27.5 metres. I've got a private member's bill to do with LNG for transport for tractors on the highways. Certainly, the extra length—if we're looking at weight as well—is something that could come up under my private member's bill.

I think I'm running out of time here. For all of the good that Bill 31 may do to increase road safety in Ontario, I know the ministry is overlooking a huge opportunity, if we don't fully debate this bill, to look at recommendations from all over the province. I'm hoping that the minister and his parliamentary secretary will listen to these concerns and amend Bill 31 to include measures that will improve how the MTO responds to poor weather conditions. I think such an initiative will go a long way to improving road safety in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we're getting close to the end of the evening. Here we are at a late-evening sitting. It is such a privilege, again, being here tonight on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

I'm so happy to hear the comments from the member from Sarnia-Lambton. Actually, I wanted to touch on his last comments that he just made in regard to the extension of the maximum length of 25 metres to 27.5 metres and some of the benefits. Actually, the Ontario Trucking Association are very much in support of that change so that they can start enhancing some of the accommodations. I personally have a lot of friends who do a lot of long travelling in their trucks. Part of their lives—actually, a good percentage, 80% to 90% of their lives, are spent in those vehicles. If you want to talk about a mobile home, it's not a mobile home, but it's actually their workplace as well. That would be very welcome to them.

Also to look at the enhancement of the actual safety mechanisms that you can put on those vehicles, which would include animal strike guards, like a moose bumper. For us northern members, not only is the bumper

important, it's also important to have an axe and a knife in your truck or in your car so you don't put that meat to waste. You can cut it up on the side of the road, bring it home and you can have a barbecue with it. There are a few things that we do differently in northern Ontario that you don't see in other locations.

You did bring up the obligations in regard to medical licence suspensions. The bill now requires regulations to prescribe exactly who must report a medical condition and exactly which medical conditions are prescribed and the individuals that are going to be entrusted with that. I think that's a step forward. It's going to be very key for us to identify who is going to be responsible and what rules there are going to be for those individuals.

There's so much more to be spoken about in this bill. I wish I had more time. Maybe at another time I will come back in the House and enjoy the comments.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You had an hour.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's a great bill. Let's talk about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I really appreciate the comments from the both the member from Sarnia-Lambton and the member from Algoma-Manitoulin regarding the road safety bill that we've got before you.

I hear support for a lot of the parts of the bill, and I think that's extremely important. Like yourself, I wish I had all evening to talk about road safety because it's certainly near and dear to my heart.

I really wanted to touch on two things. I wish I could address them all. One is, especially, the member from Sarnia-Lambton's comments about impaired driving and in particular the drug-impaired driving sanctions we're looking at bringing forward. As we know, over 45% of drivers killed in Ontario were found to have a combination of drugs and alcohol in their system. This is of great concern. So I am very excited to hear some support for the tougher measures that would be among the toughest sanctions in Canada. It looks at, if it's passed, making sure that following the alcohol-impaired driving sanctions to drug-impaired drivers would go forward. I think that that's really important, looking at escalating short-term licence suspensions of three, seven and 30 days.

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The other thing that I was really glad to hear support about was—I will look at my notes here—increasing fines for distracted driving. Distracted driving is certainly killing more people in cars and in Ontario now than almost every other thing. So we are looking at jumping ahead and making sure that we've got the legislation that will help us to deal with that, including increasing penalties from \$60 to \$500 to \$300 to \$1,000 for fines and adding three demerit points for distracted driving through regulation. That should go a long way to dealing with making sure that drivers are safer, keeping our Ontario roads safer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It is always a pleasure to offer some words after hearing my esteemed colleague from Sarnia-Lambton, Mr. Robert Bailey, Bobby Bailey as I call him, offer his thoughts to this House. He is one of those guys, I think, that just everybody looks at as the knowledgeable, wise grandpa. When he speaks, regardless of what party, people want to listen to Bob. They want to work with him.

I am so impressed. Bill 8, One Call, "call before you dig," he did with Paul Miller from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. They were able to get that through. He had the local food act, which was a private member's bill; again, he got that through. Not everybody gets even one private member's bill ever approved in this House. In my short three years here, Bobby Bailey has done two of those.

He is a very strong advocate for his constituents and tonight, again, conscientious, thoughtful and well-prepared. I think when he is speaking across the aisle to the minister about something as important as improving safety on our roads, Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe, he speaks with a lot of diligence, a lot of knowledge and a lot of sincerity. I think, hopefully, the minister will open up to Bob, reach out to him and take his thought processes to ensure that this piece of legislation, at the end of the day, is the best that it can be, to truly ensure that we are keeping people safe.

He talked a fair bit about poor weather down in his neck of the woods on the highways and how we can improve the safety of the people travelling on those roads. I think it would be well-received information by the minister to listen to Mr. Bailey. He certainly talked a little bit about drug and alcohol impairment and how we need to be addressing that to keep all people on our highways safe. Of course, every day that we come to this House, health and safety is of absolute paramount concern for all of us.

I think he did an outstanding job again of being able to say, "You know, we can support most of this type of legislation as long as there is the ability for the stakeholders to have a say, for the opposition to have a say, and ensure that at the end of the day, the legislation truly is the best that it can be."

Thank you very much, Mr. Bailey, and I look forward to hearing even more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add some comments to the discussion and debate by the member from Sarnia-Lambton. I appreciate his ideas.

The bill is an omnibus bill. It's got everything and the kitchen sink in here. Some of the more positive factors in the bill are the provisions for larger cabs on semi trucks, something that I think will facilitate long-haul truckers to be able to do their jobs better and to be a lot more comfortable and take the time necessary to do it safely, and some provisions around drugged driving, and particularly distracted driving, which the member from

Sarnia-Lambton highlighted at the beginning of his discussion.

One of the things that worries us as New Democrats is the creation of the vehicle inspection centre system. My colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin pointed out that under this new section, the minister may establish a program for inspection of vehicles and the minister may enter into agreements with service providers. We are afraid that this could potentially result in another TSSA-type agency that doesn't have the accountability or transparency that you would expect and hope of a government agency or a pseudo arm's-length government agency when it came to issuing ordinances for drivers and the status of their vehicles. We know how obviously burdensome some of the provisions are already. We'd hate to see that get away from the minister.

I said the kitchen sink: Even here, for the members' knowledge: "Sections 160 and 178 ... which prohibit persons from attaching themselves to and being towed by a vehicle or street car ... are amended to include skateboards, in-line skates and any other type of conveyance." That's a good thing. You can no longer get on your Rollerblades, grab on to the bumper and hitch a ride. I think that's a good measure. I think that means that people are going to be safer in the province of Ontario, and I'm happy that the minister covered that important aspect in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further questions and comments?

The member for Sarnia-Lambton has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I wonder how the member from Windsor will get around, if we can't hang on to the back with a skateboard.

Anyway, I want to thank the members for Algoma-Manitoulin, Cambridge, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and, of course, Essex, for their kind words. Yes, this is a serious subject but we can have a little levity with it as

well—I didn't give all of my speech to Hansard here; I've got more left here. Anyway, they probably got all they need from me.

Anyway, I did want to draw back to two or three things. The road conditions are paramount, as everyone we heard from the north experiences. It's certainly nothing like we have here down in southwestern Ontario, but our issues are just as important. It's different; we don't have the ice like they have up there.

The other thing about distracted driving: I'll be honest; when I first got my cellphone I did answer it when I was driving. I had a couple of close calls, and from now on, I give it up. The new vehicle I have now has got—what do you call it? Remote—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Bluetooth.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Bluetooth or something—I don't know; Bluetooth, black tooth—anyway, I don't need to dial the phone anymore. I ignore it, anyway, but I know it's tempting when you have it with you to answer it.

The minister is here as well with us tonight. If we could look at an app—I know they're available—that somehow would disable these phones, printers, televisions, everything people have in their vehicle. I know the technology must be out there and I really would urge them to look at that. I think people would support that because I think it's so important to their families.

If you do one thing when you're travelling, tell your spouse or your family: "Look, I'm going to be unavailable in this certain period of time. Don't send me any messages, please." You'll be doing your family a favour and they'll be doing you a favour.

Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a privilege to be able to speak here tonight.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being half past 9, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2128.

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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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Tuesday 2 December 2014

Mardi 2 décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 décembre 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government; and,

That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Monday, December 8, 2014, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 35:

—notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

—witnesses are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis; and

—each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

—the deadline for written submissions is 6 p.m. on the day of public hearings; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 6 p.m. on Monday, December 8, 2014, and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Tuesday, December 9, 2014, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m., and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

On Tuesday, December 9, 2014, at 4 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without

further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, December 10, 2014. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on General Government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

The votes on second and third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 12. I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, and good morning to you. Thank you for recognizing me to speak on this important motion. I'm very pleased to participate in this debate. I had the opportunity to speak on Bill 35 before, but I'm very happy to speak again on this particular motion.

It's an interesting position for me as I speak on this motion, because I'm wearing two hats: my hat as the government House leader and my other hat as the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the ministry that brought forward this particular bill and has worked on this for some time.

I can speak from the point of view of the importance of the passage of this bill. I can, of course, share with the members, as I have done in the past, as to the history of this bill. I think members have a good understanding and recognition of what events precipitated this bill and, of course, the many times the bill has been introduced and

debated in this House, and I'll elaborate on that as well for your pleasure.

Of course, I very much look forward to hearing from my colleagues in the House, and I would urge them to support this important motion.

It is my hope that with the support of all members in this House for Bill 35, the reintroduction of the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014, will carry through and we would, before the end of this year, have this bill into law.

As many in this Legislature already know, this is the third time that our government has introduced this important bill—not once, not twice, but three times. As the saying goes, third time lucky, so I'm really hoping this is the time that this very important bill passes through this Legislature because, as we have heard in the debate in this House from many members, from all three sides of the Legislature, this is a bill that's needed. This is a bill that has been sought. The community at large, the partners that we have in policing and civil liberties, all have asked for this bill. So I think it is due time that this bill passes into law.

This bill first passed second reading on March 20, 2012. I'll repeat: The first time this bill passed second reading was March 20, 2012. It was over two years ago when this bill was introduced for the first time, passed second reading and was then, also at the same time, referred to committee.

While at committee, important feedback was provided—of course, as committees do important work—during public hearings by over 15 organizations that participated in the public hearing process back in 2012.

Some of those organizations that participated in the conversation that took place during the committee included organizations like the Ontario Bar Association, a very important organization that I have been a part of in my past life as a lawyer; the Canadian Sikh Association, another very active community group in our province; the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, an organization that we all listen to very carefully, because they represent all the chiefs of police in our province; and Ontario Power Generation. These are just to give you an example of the over 15 organizations that presented. They were part of the process that took place in the committee. As a result of that, a number of important amendments were also made before referring the bill back to the Legislature for third reading.

0910

The bill was then reintroduced a second time on April 10, 2013. The government has been very much committed to making sure that this bill becomes law. We first introduced it in 2012. We went through the entire process, we went through committee, got to third reading, and then I believe the House was prorogued and that's why the bill died on the order paper. Immediately, on April 10, 2013, we reintroduced the bill under our new Premier, Premier Wynne. That bill then was stalled for a year before dying on the order paper, when the NDP forced the election last May.

I know the NDP likes to think they didn't call the election, but we know how the system works. In a minority Legislature in particular, if you've got a budget tabled and both parties opposite, which at that time had the majority of the members, say, "We will not support the budget bill," the way the system works, that means the government falls. That is why, once we heard from the official opposition—they have said for every single budget, in fact, that they would not support it, and I respect their very consistent position on that—and then the NDP also said "No, we will not be supporting this budget," an election was called last May, which we all participated in.

After the election, after June 12, we were back, with the privilege of having the opportunity to serve Ontarians with a majority government. We are committed to the passage of this bill in this House. That's why we have introduced this bill for the third time. I just wanted to give you, by way of an example, the amount of work that has gone on, on this very important bill, over the last two and a half years, and the persistence the government has shown to ensure that this modern, very focused and balanced piece of legislation, which deals with the security of critical infrastructure like our courthouses, electricity generating facilities and nuclear facilities, becomes law. That's why we're keen to see that this Legislature approves this bill before the end of the year, so that this law can come into place.

Speaker, because we're talking about the fact that this bill has been tabled and debated three times in the House, you can imagine the number of hours of debate that have gone on, on this bill. By my last count, including, I think, the debate that took place yesterday, we are getting close to about 20 hours of debate on this bill, and—wait for it—how many speakers? About 40 speakers have spoken in this House on this bill, and the substance of the bill hasn't really changed much. The bill changed after the amendments that were made in committee, which was extremely important. But that's a lot of speakers. And I encourage debate, because that's exactly what we are supposed to do in the House, and I'm happy to see the kind of debate that has taken place.

I just noticed that our Attorney General is here as well. The first two introductions came from the Attorney General, who has done an incredible amount of work on this particular file, and I want to thank the Attorney General, the MPP from Ottawa—Vanier, for her great work on this file. I just want to get this done for her; I'm just the messenger. She has done incredible work and has met with many, many stakeholders. Be it the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, all the civil liberties associations or the Sikh associations, she has met them all and has struck the right balance that is presented in this bill that will ensure, as I said earlier—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: With the help of the member for Nipissing.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —with the help of the member for Nipissing, the Attorney General adds. It is important to know that that collaboration existed.

But as I mentioned at one point, I believe that the second time this bill was tabled, it actually went to committee as well, where we heard from many stakeholders. The member from York South–Weston was part of the committee, so she recalls the work that was done. Like I said, over 15 organizations presented at that time.

But there was a robust debate that took place within the committee as well, among the members, and amendments were presented to improve the bill. I'm very happy to note that 16 amendments were put forward by the opposition and were all incorporated into the proposed legislation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: All of those amendments were incorporated into the bill.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke; he's making my point right now. The three parties worked together, and the opposition introduced 16 amendments. All 16 were approved and are part of this bill. The bill that is before this House, Bill 35—

Interjection.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We're looking for the opportunity to speak on this very important bill.

Bill 35 includes all of those 16 amendments. We did not change anything, Speaker, in the reintroduction of this bill since it was last at the committee. I think that's an important point. I want all the members to know this and, of course, I want all Ontarians to know this: that this bill reflects not only the point of view of the organizations that spoke on this bill, but that of other members as well.

I really strongly feel, and I think the members on this side of the House strongly feel, that it is now time to pass this bill into law.

Very quickly, just to share a little bit of the history of this bill, and I think everybody is quite aware of this—I was listening to the debate that has taken place on this bill: almost 20 hours now. This bill was developed in response to the recommendations that were made by Ontario's Ombudsman in December 2010 and also the very important work that our former Chief Justice of the Ontario Court of Appeal, Roy McMurtry, did and provided to the government in April 2011. I want to thank not only the Ombudsman, but most importantly I want to thank Mr. McMurtry for his incredible work on this particular file.

During the G20, the use of the Public Works Protection Act had become the subject of significant public concern. Both the Ombudsman and the former Chief Justice recommended that the Public Works Protection Act be repealed and replaced with more modern, focused legislation. Our government, under the leadership of then-Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, now our Attorney General, the member from Ottawa–Vanier, conducted extensive consultations while developing this bill to determine what measures would be needed to ensure security should the Public Works Protection Act be repealed.

We sought input and advice from nuclear operators and regulators, electricity producers, justice partners and

municipalities. We also consulted with civil liberties advocates to be sure that the appropriate balance was struck between security and civil liberty, including the organizations I mentioned earlier: the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights. All of the legislative debates, amendments and extensive feedback that we have heard are incorporated in this particular bill.

If passed, this bill will (1) repeal the Public Works Protection Act; (2) amend the Police Services Act as it relates to our courthouses and safety and security in our courthouses; and (3) create a new bill that outlines a security mechanism for our nuclear facilities and large electricity generating facilities—all, you would agree, Speaker, critical infrastructure in our province.

I'm going to end at this point, but again, I urge the members that this is an important bill. This is a bill that is a result of extensive work that has been done over the last almost three years. That this is a bill that is tabled for the third time demonstrates government's goodwill and commitment to pass this bill into legislation. This is a bill that has gone through extensive debate, significant input and changes as a result of work that the opposition parties have done. I really urge, Speaker, through you, all members to support this bill and ensure its speedy passage before we recess for Christmas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to get this morning started on the right foot. I want to pay a compliment to the House leader of the government. I remember when he was first elected here, and I say this with all due respect: He used to really get upset if you heckled him when he was speaking. But he has grown so much now that he ignores everything I say when he's speaking. Either I'm losing my touch or he has gotten a lot better at tuning out the noise from within. That's the compliment.

0920

Now I'm going to challenge him. I'm going to ask him why he won't work with the opposition on this. This is a bill that—my goodness, as he said—when the current Attorney General, the then Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, introduced this bill, I was the critic for that portfolio at that time. We worked closely to come up with a bill that would represent what needed to be done. I think we're there. But the House leader knows they're in a majority now. This bill will pass. What's the hurry? You see, since it was introduced in early 2012, the world has not fallen apart. We're still having courts, and the nuclear facilities are still operating. In fact, Darlington won an award for efficiency last year. It's not like the world has come to a stop. It's not like we've shut down our nuclear facilities, and it's not like the court system has been put into limbo; it's still functioning. Why would he not take this opportunity—on a bill that we're going to work with them again—and allow us to have the input at this stage to see if there's anything further that can be done to improve this piece of legislation? He seems to be on a time allocation mission.

Mr. Todd Smith: He's addicted to time allocation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's addicted to time allocation. I hope that when he comes back from the Christmas recess he has found a cure, or, perhaps, he's gone to "time allocation anonymous." He doesn't have to give his name there, either, he can just go to the meetings and he can, "I am"—one name—"and I'm"—how would you say that?—"I'm an allocation-olic. My name is such-and-such, and I'm an allocation-olic." Hopefully, when he comes back, he'll be cured of that addiction. It would be a good thing for his government as well.

You see, what has happened here is this government—and there are wonderful people over there. I know many of them fairly well now over the years, and the newer ones I'm getting to know a little bit, but they're falling into this trap.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Kool-Aid.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not just the Kool-Aid, I say to the member from Barrie—it's called the idea that arrogance is okay.

I want to remind you, because you're all old enough to remember—do you remember David Peterson? He became the Premier in 1985 because of a deal that was made between him and Bob Rae. He became Premier even though he had less seats than the Frank Miller Conservatives—52 to 48. They had some legitimacy in calling for them to become the government because they actually had a slightly higher share of the popular vote in the 1985 general election.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They also had more seats.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, they didn't have more seats. They had 48; Miller had 52.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm saying, between the opposition.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Of course they had more than—Miller didn't have a majority. Gilles, you just stick to what you're doing there. Look on the computer; you'll get the facts.

In 1985, they had a slightly higher popular vote than the Conservatives, so they took over the government. You know, it wasn't that bad. Obviously, the people in Ontario liked what they saw because in 1987 David Peterson won what was the highest number of seats, I believe, in Ontario's history—92 seats they won in the general election of 1987. But what happened then is, this all went to their heads. They thought that they weren't just elected but that they were deified, and that somehow they were governing from above the clouds and they were untouchable.

They became extremely arrogant and believed that under no circumstances would they ever lose government, because they had a divine right to rule. It was ordained from the heavenly host that David Peterson and the Liberals would rule in Ontario. But you see, what happened was he took that and he said, "Oh, I want to go for another mandate." So in 1990, only three years into his term, he said, "I'd like to secure another four years. We're going to win another big majority, and I'll be the Premier until at least 1994, or maybe longer. If I call this

election in 1990 and ignore what's been happening in Ontario—don't worry about the opposition. They don't matter. I've got 92 seats. Who cares about those people on the other side?"

Lo and behold, David Peterson, in his arrogance, decided, "Yeah, we're going to the polls." In September 1990, what happened? That 92-seat majority government that was held by the Liberals—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would remind the member—I appreciate the history lesson, but I'm sure you're going to get around to the point in terms of speaking to the motion that is before us. Just to remind you to keep that focus. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I most certainly am, Speaker. I think this is the crux of the matter, because it is absolutely unnecessary for this government to be bringing in this time allocation, and I'm reminding what can happen when your zeal to rule with an iron fist becomes so powerful that you lose sight of the fact that there are people elected on this side of the House, there are people whose constituents have sent them here to hold this government to account and they are being ignored by the government. That's what happened to David Peterson, and we all know what happened in the end. That's what I'm trying to explain, sir, and I think that speaks to the point precisely—precisely.

In 1990, the New Democrats, who had never formed government in the province of Ontario, threw a beating on David Peterson like you wouldn't believe. He couldn't have even got out of that one using the rope-a-dope. David Peterson was crushed. Why? Because he was too arrogant to believe that the democracy that gave him 92 seats in 1987—just as democracy giveth, democracy taketh away. That is my reminder to the Liberals here—

Mr. Todd Smith: That's a good lesson.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That is a good lesson for you to learn and look back on. Don't think that somehow these actions of yours in 2014 will not come back to haunt you some day if you don't change your ways. The belief that you have this ironclad right or this divine right to rule as you see fit because you have a majority is very dangerous. It can leave you with the idea that you are untouchable, but you will find that in the end, the people are the final arbiter of whether or not you have governed properly.

You have the legal and the legislative right to do what you're doing here today. You've done it how many times, I say to my friend from Timmins—now I'm asking for his help. How many times, since we got here in October, have they brought in time allocation?

Mr. John Vanthof: As many times as possible.

Mr. John Yakabuski: As many times as there have been bills, they've brought in time allocation. Have we passed a single bill through the normal channels in this session?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not yet.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not yet, other than the budget bill. The budget bill was passed before we came back in October. That was passed back in July. But we have not

passed a single bill through the normal channels in this legislative session, and that really says an awful lot about the way the government is viewing the collaborative sense that was envisioned when Parliaments under the British system were developed in the first place. Each party has a role to play, each side of the chamber has a vital role to play, and they're freezing the opposition out.

0930

I will say this: The previous majority governments of Dalton McGuinty—and I know that's not a good word to say in here because I know that the Liberals don't want to use his name very much—didn't use this time allocation to the extent that our new Premier, Premier Kathleen Wynne, is using it, and I really do want to caution her that I think she is overstepping the bounds of parliamentary decency. That's what I'm appealing.

I've had about five different approaches in my speeches on time allocation in this session, because I am trying every angle I can think of to appeal to the sense of fair play and justice in the hearts and the minds of the members on the opposite side. I have come out and railed against them. I have come out and spoken of dreams that I've had about the House leader and the ghost of time allocation past, not unlike the Christmas Carol and Ebenezer Scrooge, which I talked about. But in the end, Ebenezer Scrooge came around. Not only did he find that being kind and generous was better, but it changed his life completely, and he became the most generous man in the city.

I've tried that approach. I've tried getting up and venting my anger at how frustrated we are on this side of the House, and now I'm trying to appeal to their sense of fair play, to their sense of what is right, to their sense of giving something to the other members who were elected. Look, I'm not arguing with the numbers; you've got your majority. Congratulations to all the new members who were elected—12 or 13 new members on that side of the House, and I've had a chance to say hello to every one of them—but I don't think this is what they believed they were buying into when they got here either. I think that they believed they were coming here to a House of debate, not a House of one side railroading the other, using its pure power, because in a democracy, 50% plus one gives you absolute power, but it is the wise ruler who uses that power benevolently.

You can choose to be as callous and to be as controlling and to ignore everything that the other side of the House has to say. You can choose to do that when you have the majority, but you can also choose to say, "Those are good people over there, elected by their constituents. There's a reason they got here. There are reasons they got here. They didn't run on our platform." Understandably, the people on the other side believed that that platform had everything in it that Ontario needs, and they won the election, but all the members on this side of the House ran on different platforms, yet we all got elected. There must be a reason that we all got elected; we must have been doing something right so that the people of our constituencies believed that we were the right persons for the job.

All I'm asking for is that the government take that into consideration. New members: Do an examination of your conscience, and ask yourself, "Should we simply take the orders from headquarters, that corner office on the second floor, right over there?" If I had a straight line that I could pierce walls and concrete, it would be right about there. Would they take this opportunity to vote against, to set a precedent that might set things right? We can't stop this time allocation motion. We're getting two hours to debate it, and essentially it's just fluff and just a waste of time in some regards, but we do have to fill the time. At the end of that two hours, there will be a deferred vote, and we're going to lose the vote. We're going to lose the vote unless those new members, who were also elected by their constituents, ask themselves, "Is this the right thing to do or the wrong thing to do?"

In my mind, Speaker, it's absolutely the wrong thing to do, especially since we haven't—and I'll talk a little bit about the bill, if I may. I spoke to the bill yesterday. There are an awful lot of good things in this bill, and we want to get it passed. I believe that absolutely we could have negotiated our way to passing this bill. We could have been part of that discussion; we could have been part of that decision. This government decided, "We don't need you. We're going to poke our finger in your eye once more and tell you when this bill is going to pass," because it's all outlined right in the motion, I say to my friends in the third party.

There it is, right in the motion. We know exactly when this bill is going to pass. It's like telling the future. The only thing that could change that future is if some of those members on the other side of the House decide, "You know what? It's Christmastime and we're going to do the right thing and we're going to show the kind of respect that people in the opposition should be given."

Mr. Todd Smith: They could do that at caucus today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They could do that at caucus.

I say that the bill itself is not the problem. The world changed after 9/11. We needed to change the way we dealt with security around our large generating facilities, particularly nuclear plants. We got almost 60% of our power last year from nuclear power. It's vital to our economy. It's vital to our health and welfare. Everybody knows that if you're out of power, it's not a good life. Here in the Canadian winter, if you're out of power it's a matter of life and death. If you're out of power for indeterminate or long periods of time, your safety is in danger. We know how vital power is, and we've got to do whatever we can to protect those facilities that provide that power. This bill will assist in doing so.

In reality, the way we conduct security around nuclear facilities has changed already, and rightfully so, because we cannot leave those things to chance. There's a significant threat, because of the fact that we have radioactive materials in these facilities, that they could be used for nefarious purposes as well. So we do have to protect them, and that's what we're trying to do with this bill. We're working with the government on this bill. We have worked with the government on this bill. All we're

asking for is an opportunity to let this bill pass through negotiation and agreement as opposed to having it rammed down our throats every time we turn around.

I think what they're trying to do here is render the opposition irrelevant. Do you know how dangerous that would be? They're trying to set a tone here that as long as you have a majority, you might as well have an empty chamber on the opposite side because you do whatever you want. But everyone knows that unless they change the electoral system and make themselves dictators for life, there will be an election someday, and how they behave—not just whether or not their legislative agenda has been satisfactory to the people, but how they've respected democracy, the bedrock of our society. Democracy is what our society is founded on, so that the people always have the final say. How they respect democracy is going to go a long way to determine whether or not they'll be successful the next time they go to the people and the polls.

This is an opportunity, here on the 2nd of December, for them to change the channel, to switch—to do a 180 and show the people of Ontario that they actually are listening. To be fair, I don't think the people of Ontario pay that close attention to the machinations that go on in this House and to some of the things—they have a good eye on the big picture but they maybe don't understand the inside baseball. But if they knew and if they understood that every bill in this House is being rammed through without following the usual procedures of debate and input from third party stakeholders, they would be distressed. They would be upset. They would be asking themselves, "What government wants to operate that way? Why wouldn't a government want the input from those third party stakeholders and honest, constructive criticism from the opposition?"

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This is an opportunity for you to change the channel, so I appeal—I know I'm not going to get anywhere with the members of the cabinet, because they're not going to disobey the Premier. They would be out of a job the next day. They would be out of cabinet. Maybe I should say to the members in the backbench that if a few of those people in the cabinet get fired, you might get in. There are only two kinds of people over on that side: those who are in cabinet and those who want to be in cabinet. You see? So there's an opportunity there as well. But what happens either way, somebody on the other side has to see the other side and what they're saying. This is your opportunity.

I'm going to end now, because I know I have other members who want to speak to this as well. Thank you very much for hearing me this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just before I start my comments on this particular time allocation motion: I thought it interesting that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing talked about how the Liberals ran on their platform. I was thinking, and I would just like to share this with the member

from Renfrew, that they actually ran against your platform and now they're implementing it. That must be pretty frustrating, from your perspective. You may have had the winning platform, according to these guys.

No, it is kind of ironic. Liberals are really notorious for that; they profess something different in an election. They profess that they have these great values and they want to do the right things and are so progressive. Then they get elected and they do the complete opposite.

Remember Mr. Trudeau? Remember there was this guy by the name of Trudeau? He was Prime Minister of Canada. Remember Mr. Stanfield?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Stanfield ran during the general election and said, "I think that because of the high inflation in this country, we need to have wage and price controls." Mr. Trudeau ran across the country and campaigned against Mr. Stanfield and attacked him viciously throughout the entire campaign, saying, "My God, this is terrible, and any Prime Minister and party that runs on wage and price controls shouldn't be elected by the people of Canada. That's terrible." What did he do when he got elected?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Wage and price controls.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wage and price controls—and he got away with it.

You remember Joe Clark, who had that very short minority Parliament, Mr. Speaker? Joe Clark wanted to increase—

Mr. Mike Colle: Joe Who.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They called him Joe Who.

Joe Clark—you remember?—wanted to increase the tax on fuel. So he brought in his budget, and one of the measures in his budget was increasing the taxes on fuel. The Liberals voted against it, along with the NDP, because they said, "This is not fair to the economy of Canada." What's the first thing Mr. Trudeau did when he got re-elected?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, not Trudeau.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He raised the price of fuel.

Now, in this last provincial election, Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals—oh, my God, Tim Hudak was going to take away jobs in the public sector. He was going to cut services and cut budgets. Oh, my God, it was the end of the world. "If you vote Liberal, everything will be fine. We'll do the opposite."

What are these guys doing?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Chop, chop, chop.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They're doing exactly what Tim Hudak suggested doing: chopping jobs in the public sector and really reducing expenditures. We look at hospitals in our communities. All of them are losing ER time. They're shutting down physiotherapy at the Timmins and District General Hospital. If you look at social services across the province, this government is actually doing what the Tories said they would do.

I've always said Liberals are just Tories in a hurry. The quicker people recognize it, the easier—

Mr. John Vanthof: They're Tories on the fly.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Tories on the slide.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I digress. I had to point that one out, because I find it very frustrating, from my perspective as a New Democrat, that Liberals continually get away, with the public, with saying one thing in an election and doing completely the opposite.

The wonderful thing is, the Liberals think it's a virtue. They really think it's a virtue. They call it pragmatic and practical. Well, I would call it something else. I would call it something that's non-parliamentary, and I'm not going to use that word in this House.

Mr. Speaker, this is the seventh time allocation motion this government has brought in in this fall session. This is number 7. What is really unfortunate about this is that, in fact, because we're time-allocating everything, there's actually less business being done for the government than there would be if they negotiated with the opposition.

We said to the government at the beginning—because the government House leader came into the House leaders' meetings at the beginning of this fall session and he said yes, in fact, he wanted to work with the opposition. "If you could only tell us what you want as far as time on these particular bills, or time in committee on these particular bills, let us know and maybe we can let some of the other ones go fast."

So he came originally with a package of four bills. Was it four?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, it was four initially. He said, "Here are the four bills that we want to have passed at the end of the session."

Both the opposition parties agreed. We said, "Yes, okay, not a problem. We understand you want your four bills, but we want to be able to have some time in committee on some of the bills that you're bringing before the House."

The Conservatives had indicated that they wanted some public hearings on the daycare bill, and we obviously wanted time for public hearings on other bills. After making the offer and having the opposition House leaders go back to the government with, "Okay, this is kind of what we were looking at"—there was no deal, but we were starting to have that discussion—the government House leader came in and said, "All bets are off. I'm time-allocating everything," by way of his actions.

My argument is simply this: If government backbenchers think this is a great, wonderful strategy that your House leader has come up with, and that you're getting your agenda, that is so important, through the House lickety-split, there's a lot to learn about parliamentary democracy. In fact, things are slower this way than they would be if we just did them in the normal way that Parliaments are supposed to.

Here's how it works. Mr. Speaker, you've heard me say this before. At one time, there was no such thing as time allocation in this Legislature. It was a completely foreign concept. Majority governments met in this very Legislature for over 100 years. Majority governments did not have time allocation, but they passed their business

through this House, because what they eventually were able to do was sit down with the opposition House leaders and work out an agreement on whatever it was that they wanted to do in that session or that year.

This is the way it worked: The Premier would go to the government House leader and say, "Here is what cabinet would like to have done in this calendar year—12 months. I don't care how you work it out at House leaders'. Just go work it out. But here are the things that I want: I want Bills 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 done by Christmas and I want Bills 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 done by spring. These are must-dos; we have to get them done." But of course, the government had probably double and triple that amount of bills that they were going to put on the order paper through those sessions. So the government House leader knew what his marching orders were.

That actually meant to say that the Premier's office had to manage, had to figure out what they wanted and had to be able to figure out a way of what it was they wanted and when they needed it. They really had to manage it in the sense of being clear with their House leader about what they wanted.

Then the government House leader would come in to the House leaders' meetings and say, "Okay, here's what I need. What do you guys want?" The opposition would say, "Well, on Bill 2 and on Bill 7, we want more time at second reading. We want to be able to travel the bill on committee across Ontario in the intersession."

The opposition would give its wants when it came to how much time we were going to have on bills and debate. That was a good thing, Mr. Speaker, because the bills that really needed public attention were the bills that were being flagged by the opposition for more time—not all of them, but some of them, the key ones.

Here's the kicker: The bills actually travelled outside the Legislature so that the people of Ontario—do you remember those people, Mr. Speaker, the people that we work for, the citizens of Ontario? Well, they actually got a chance to come to places like Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Cornwall, Sarnia and Timmins and to be able to speak to the bill and say, "I like this. Please change that. I don't like this. Please don't do it." They just gave their views.

The committee would come back. All members on all sides of the House would sit at committee. They would do clause-by-clause. They would amend the bill, based on what they heard. What you ended up with was a better product at the end. That's the way that it worked.

But here's the thing: Not every bill was debated at full infinitum at second reading, and hardly a bill was even debated at third reading.

It was Jim Bradley, the member from wherever, St. Catharines—

Mr. John Vanthof: St. Catharines.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —St. Catharines, I think it is, who was the opposition House leader at the time I was in government, in the early 1990s. When time allocation was brought in, Mr. Bradley pointed out correctly that third reading would completely change as a result of time allocation. Prior to time allocation, there was no debate at

third reading—hardly ever. But he said, “I guarantee you now, we will debate everything at third reading as long as we can,” and that’s exactly what’s happening.

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What the government has done by bringing time allocation to this House on these bills is that they’ve forced the opposition to debate every bill entirely at length as long as we can by the standing orders, which is six and a half hours at second reading; to use all the time in a time allocation motion, which is two hours each; and use all the time we can at third reading, which is two hours per bill—so far, unless the government changes that in the time allocation motion, which they probably will at one point.

My question to the government members in the backbench—you’ve been told this is a great strategy—and for cabinet ministers who are here as well: Are you really saving any time by using time allocation to deal with these bills? I would argue not.

The government moved Bill 18 by way of time allocation. Now, I need a little bit of help because I don’t have it. That was which one? Ah, there we go. My House team is—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I got it. It was the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Bill 18 was a bill that was brought through the House. Bill 15, Bill 10, Bill 21, Bill 7, Bill 35—without referring to each one of them because I don’t have the list in front of me, the issue is that a lot of those bills probably would not have been debated any longer than two or three hours at second reading. You probably would have had a lead by the minister on the bill. You probably would have had an hour, maybe a little bit less, by the critics of each party, a couple of speeches and done, into committee.

In fact, out of the seven bills that the government has brought before us, these seven bills, I will argue, would have not had six and half hours each of debate at second reading. Some of them would have had less. But here’s the thing: In exchange, we would have said, “Let’s travel some of these bills.” The government told us, and we found out through this fall session, that they didn’t want to have the bills travelled in the intersession because they wanted the bills passed by the end of the session this December.

Well, okay, if that’s what the government wanted, the opposition would have said, “Okay. We have a constituency week coming up in there. Let’s use the constituency week to do the hearings outside of Toronto”; and possibly we might have been open to the idea of travelling the bill while the House sat. But at least there would have been an opportunity for the public to have their say on the bills and the government would have gotten its entire agenda through the House. But instead, the government says, “I’m going to time-allocate it.” My point is this: By the very nature of going the time allocation route, it’s less efficient use of this time than it would be if we just did things the way we normally should, by negotiations with the House leaders.

And the other thing is that it’s a failure of management on the part of the Premier and the House leader. If they can’t manage seven little bills through the House by way of an agreement with the opposition, both the Premier and the opposition leader, well, then it’s a failure of management on their part. What does that say about the management of government overall? If they can’t manage a little agenda—a legislative agenda is seven bills on time allocation, and they’ve got Bills 6, 7, 9, 13, 37, 40, 45, 49 and 52, so they’ve got about 10 other bills on the order paper to deal with. If you’re going to tell me that as a government you can’t prioritize those 10 plus these seven for a total of 17 bills, and prioritize at the beginning of the fall which of these bills you wanted passed by the end of December and which ones you wanted to get done in the intersession, it’s a failure on your part. It means to say that the Premier is not taking the time to seriously look at her legislative agenda as to what it is she, along with her cabinet, actually needs passed by the second week of December, and it’s a failure on her part to decide what her priorities are, which stifles her government House leader to be able to do his job. I don’t think the government should be proud that time allocation is solving anything, because what it does is, it exposes the government’s inability to manage. If you can’t manage 17 bills through the House, how are you going to manage the Ministry of Health? How are you going to manage the Ministry of Education, if you can’t even manage 17 bills through the House?

I say to the government across the way, I listen to the comments, especially the new backbenchers within the government caucus, and I don’t begrudge your comments. I used to be a government backbencher, elected in 1990, and I used to think that everything my cabinet did and my Premier did was the bee’s knees to everything. My God, we had the God-inherent right to govern. I believed all that pap at that time, too. It took me a while to figure out that, in fact, the only people being disserved were the constituents that we represented. It took the wisdom of certain members of this House—remember Bob Nixon? He was a Liberal, by the way, in case you don’t know who he is. But guys like Bob Nixon, Mr. Scott, Mr. Bradley, Mr. Rae, Mr. Pouliot, Mr. Laughren, Mr. Eves—it took listening to the speeches that they had in this House and the conversations I had with those people around the committees and around this House to slowly understand that the British parliamentary system is an amazing system if you allow it to work.

You know, it was at one time a king who decided everything, decided literally life and death. At one point, the British, with the amazing history of the British parliamentary system and how it developed, created a Parliament in order to limit the power of the king. That’s what Parliaments were all about. Initially, it was to stop the king from being able to utilize his complete authority to the detriment of the people of England. You know, why did they bring the Magna Carta around King John? It was to stop the excesses of King John. So we created a Parliament. Parliament was around before King John, but

Parliament started exerting its authority and its power over the years so that we could limit the authority of the king so that it is measured and done for the good of the people. Now we have kings, or in this case a queen, but the real executive power no longer resides with the monarch. It resides with your Premier and with your cabinet.

So this Legislature, essentially, is here to make sure that we approve the budgetary measures of the government and we deal with the money issues—because anything that has to do with money has to be approved through this House, and that's the way it should be—and the policies of the government. And if you think, as a member of this House, either on the opposition side or the government side, that time allocation is a wonderful tool that allows you to do your jobs and makes Parliament more efficient, well, I just suggest that you go back and read your history of Parliament and how it was developed. You'll learn an appreciation that the British parliamentary system, as Winston Churchill said, is the best of the worst systems of democracy that we have, because over almost 1,000 years, we've developed this check and balance system in which the legislative and the executive are able to cohabitate in a way that complements each other. So if we allowed Parliament to work the way that it was, I think we'd probably be in a much better position to be able to actually get the agenda of the House done through here.

Let's look at what's left. I'm going to leave the rest of the time in a few minutes for my colleagues who want to speak to this. But the government's got a couple of more bills that I imagine might be time-allocated. They've got Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. I would not be surprised to see the government time-allocate that. They've got Bill 7 to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act. They might time-allocate that. I'm not going to go through the 17 bills, but the point is, there are a lot of those bills that would have gotten no debate time, or hardly any, if the government had actually negotiated with the opposition to be able to get things done.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There goes the new government member. My God, he's a parliamentary authority already. You remind me of me when I used to be over there as a new member.

Mr. Grant Crack: How many bills did we get passed last session?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no. Listen, I admit it. I freely admit, when I got elected in this place, I was in a majority government and I thought just like you. But it's taken me a lot of years to figure out that, in fact, the government is doing itself a disservice. The reality is that we would not have debated all of these bills ad infinitum, because we would have had to give something to the government. That's how it works. If the government had come in and said, "We have 17 bills that we're going to have on the order paper this fall; here are the three or four that we want passed, third reading, by the end of

December, and here are the ones that can go into the intersession," we would have sat down and worked something out. And yes, the government would have been forced by the opposition to travel a couple of bills in committee, maybe in the November 11 break and maybe in the intersession in January or February. But that's what Parliament is all about.

I would only end on this point: We have not travelled bills in this House in a long, long time in the way that we used to. We've had some travelling committees, but not anywhere near what we used to. The great thing about committees was, when members of all sides of the House were forced to share the plane, share the bus, share the hotel—not the rooms but share our meals and stuff—members actually sat down and got to know each other.

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You know what? There's not a person who is elected to this place who is not an honourable person. There's not a person who is elected to this place who has a monopoly on anything. All of us are trying to do the right thing on all sides of the House. But what committee did was it showed us the human side of the relationship as parliamentarians and it allowed us to do our jobs better, because some of those people who were on committee eventually ended up in positions of leadership, in both parties. You grow together as far as learning and getting to appreciate each other's position, and it allows this place to work a lot better.

I would argue that the government is doing a great disservice by doing time allocation and should heed the advice of the opposition and actually sit down and try to negotiate how we get the agenda of the government through the House. I accept, as an opposition member, that the government has to have its way in the end. That's the way the system works. But the government has to accept that we have the authority and we have the responsibility to give scrutiny to those bills.

With that, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to other people who have something to say in this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's unfortunate that I have to stand to talk again about another time allocation bill that has come before us. We have a government here—this is about the seventh bill they've brought through, and you've got to wonder why, especially with this bill, because the last time they introduced it, it was over a year before it came back up for debate. Obviously in that time there was nobody really opposing it. We were debating it, but they never even called it for debate for over a year. So why, all of a sudden, does this one have to be rushed through?

I think it's become clear, because I remember speaking on it the last time—it was one of my first debates in the House, actually—that it was an embarrassment to this government. They didn't want to talk about all the details around the G20 conference that was held. When they enacted kind of a secret regulation, they didn't even tell all the police forces about it, and it led to a lot of con-

fusion, more arrests in this country than have ever happened in the history of it. I know it's only coming up to 150 years old, but this government's claim to fame is over 1,100 arrests. It just talked about a fiasco and really about not thinking things through.

We see this is another bill that, yes, I guess restricts some of the powers of the minister, which we see now from the G20 was well overdue. We saw some of the talks about the Ombudsman at the time. André Marin said that it was an illegal regulation that resulted in a massive breach of civil liberties. I saw some of the videos that went on there, and it really was an embarrassment. This looked like a Third World country. The one instance where the amputee's leg was pulled off and he was arrested because he wouldn't move—those are just things that you're really not very proud to see happen in this province, let alone this country, but that was happening under the Liberal watch.

Roy McMurtry's comments in the independent inquiry found the act "beyond troubling" and recommended that it be repealed. Of course, we agreed with that. At that time, the bill was introduced—I guess it was Bill 51—and it sat there. They didn't want to debate it because any debate that we had pointed out major failings of this government. That's something they have found a way around now. With time allocation, they can push this through and get it through without debate and without our pointing out some of the issues that we saw with this bill.

I look through long lists—I guess this is seventh bill that they're pushing through on time allocation. Every one seems to have a common agenda: They don't want the debate that we think would be important. Bill 7, the Better Business Climate Act: Could there be anything worse than the regulation we have in this province? We would like to see it pass, anything that will take down regulation. But there is no debate on it. We have no say on what comes down, what this bill will include. I know they say it goes for amendments. There is no realistic public consultation.

Bill 8, public sector and MPP accountability: A laughable bill, and, of course, I can see why that, again, was time-allocated, with the failings of this government: the gas plant violations, the deletions—anything but accountability.

If you go around my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, people talk about this government and just can't believe that a government that acts this way is actually in the free world, let alone in Canada, and now they're talking about an accountability act.

Talking about the Advocate for Children and Youth Services, he was trying to get some investigative powers—negotiating with this government for six years. Somebody that was appointed by them, a commissioner of this Legislature, had restricted powers. The bill comes out and, my God, they forgot to include him in the bill. They sent him to amendments, if you can believe that.

He talked about how he's the only advocate for child and youth services in this country that has no investiga-

tive powers. Why wouldn't they do that? Why wouldn't they want to know where there are issues? I guess, again, anything that is a threat to them, anything that points out an issue with wrongdoing or just a lack of oversight just comes back to haunt them, so the easy way around is to make sure it doesn't happen. We're going to be working through amendments on that bill to see that we can get this important role—what is more vulnerable than our youth? He talked about getting phone calls from children in trouble but was not allowed to investigate—a sad state of affairs. For a government that seems to be encouraging that, it's hard to believe.

Another bill we looked at: child care modernization—the loss of 140,000 child care spots. Again, no meaningful discussion with independent child care providers, which welcome being licensed. Now they have to join either a franchise or an association. All that does is drive up costs and make it—the people they should be helping, the people who are on low incomes who are having a hard time finding meaningful work, especially when they have children, now will be taxed even further by increased rates—again, certainly not working for them. When will this government start looking around and seeing how much trouble there is?

I attended the new mayor-elect's swearing-in last night in Cornwall—a very nice ceremony. Mayor Leslie O'Shaughnessy—I sat with him in the counties, actually, in Charlottenburg township, before. He was a great mayor there, and we're looking for great things in the city of Cornwall.

Employees in social services came up, and they talked about—they were asking, "What can we do about hydro? We've got people in our riding who aren't getting services. They can't afford their hydro bills." They said that, generally, they used to have a way of covering some of these costs—United Way used to have money. We're starting at the beginning of the winter; there's no money there. What are people doing? I know, legally, there is a regulation that after December 1 you can't cut their power off, but they can limit the power with power limiters.

I talked to somebody just last week who had their power cut off. You know how expensive it is now to get it reconnected? These are people who can't afford their bills, especially after last year, where we went through and saw places where hydro went into people's bank accounts and took money out—more money than they were owed, and then refused to pay it back. Again, this is something that you wouldn't expect in a province like Ontario, where a government crown corporation had the ability to go in, overcharge people and then have the gall not to pay it back. We're talking, sometimes, well over \$1,000. You're looking at seniors that had cheques bouncing, rent cheques bouncing, because the government, in their wisdom, overcharged them and then refused—until it blew up last—it's funny how bad publicity changes things. When people became aware of how bad it was, all of a sudden all the things they couldn't do were just changed. All of a sudden there was no problem

to change it. Change was very quick—between bills, actually; less than a few weeks.

It's our job here to really bring scrutiny to this government, to provide a meaningful opposition. We're being cut off; we're not allowed to provide that service. In our system, that's a very important service. The member from Pembroke talked about the eagles and the owls. This is an eagle that seems to be ready to pounce on anything he can, and not always very favourably sometimes. I think we need a little more of the owls here on this side to point out some of the issues.

This bill will go through with no debate again, with a problem that was so international. This was a huge embarrassment to this country, the way this province, this government, ran the security around the G20, and now they're going to push through legislation without debate. I think that alone points out that this is a bill that should be allowed to move around in committee—should be able to talk to the experts and look at some of the fallacies or faults of this bill, because I'm sure there are some; there always are. Nobody gets everything perfect. But time allocation will push through a bill that this government had no hurry at all to put through just a year ago. Now, all of a sudden, it's a panic.

I think that speaks to the way this government is running things. This is the seventh bill now in a row that we see being pushed through—just introduced. Meanwhile, the province, as I say, is going to hell in a hand wagon, with youth unemployment at one of its highest levels. It's a sad shame. We just need to get back to properly running this government, having the opposition providing meaningful opposition, going through committee and actually being listened to.

I'm very curious after the ministry pointed to our Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth and suggested they will go the amendment route, because if the amendments actually get adopted, that will be a first that I can see. I sat through the last Legislature and this one as well, and amendments are just voted down, without any regard—and in some cases, when the bill was introduced, the amendments that they so strongly voted down were actually included in the new legislation.

Everybody remembers when the House was prorogued by former Premier McGuinty when things got too hot the last time. Bills that were sitting on the table with amendments that we had proposed were turned down, but when the bill was resurrected, they were put in. There's a case where there's no working together. I think that's a strong indication—and I remember that in the cellphone bill we were looking at the original bill that had your cellphone service cancelled on the day that your contract ran out and you lost your number, which I think was ridiculous. We tried to point that out to the minister of the day. We tried to put an amendment in, and both were turned down.

When we came back after prorogation, we were surprised that that very amendment was included in the bill. All of a sudden, it was a good idea. This is a government that doesn't seem to want to listen to the opposition, even

when it's an idea that obviously they thought was worthwhile. It speaks to what we're likely going to see going through committee on this bill. We're going to see a government that's likely not going to adopt any of the recommendations of the hearings that we go through, the amendments we would make and any of the amendments that are suggested by outside parties or by the third party.

I would encourage them—part of this—we've been very successful. We used to be the engine of Confederation until this government came to power. Everybody remembers that. People came to work in Ontario, but now it's not that way. I think that's because we're not running the government the way it should be run. The opposition does have some good ideas, some merit, and I think we should work together to put those amendments, or at least listen to them.

My son came back from working out in Fort McMurray for two years. One of his classmates in Toronto as a civil engineer out of Queen's couldn't get work—working as a waitress. She finally gave up looking for a job in her home province, moved out to Alberta and got a job within two days of moving out there. That's the difference. That used to be Ontario: where people got their jobs. Maybe not in every degree but some degrees like engineering, that's the way it used to be.

My time is up for this morning, so we will look forward to further debate.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 10:15. This Legislature stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to acknowledge that Wendy Eaton, who is the mother of page captain Nicole Eaton, will be here today, and she'll be in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Granville Anderson: It's with great pleasure that I announce the mother and friends of Hannah Hamilton: her mother, Jennifer Hamilton, and friends Renee Homenuck, Halley Gavey, Grace Marlow, Lilly Tuck and Ashley Best. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I am very happy to introduce the family of page Tyler. They're here today: mother, Jennifer; father, Rodney; sister Hannah, sister Abby, brother Carter; and grandparents Kathy and Andy Jakiwchuk. Welcome. Tyler is doing an excellent job.

Mr. Arthur Potts: From the excellent riding of Beaches—East York, I have Canadian Martyrs Separate School in the House today. Parents Mila Viray, Kim Shum, Mark Hahn and Marjorie Lee are here with teachers Kelly Waywell and Robert Mycoot. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to introduce to the House staff and delegates from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance: Danielle Pierre, Jen Carter,

Rodrigo Narro Perez, Phil Lloyd and Sam Lambert. They're sitting in the members' east gallery. Welcome.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We've got some distinguished guests from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters who are visiting Queen's Park today: Jayson Myers, president and CEO, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters; Craig McIntosh, executive chairman, Acrylon Plastics Inc., who is the CME's national board chair; Mathew Wilson, vice-president, national policy, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters; David Fowler, CEO of Wescast Industries Inc.; Rory McAlpine, vice-president, government and industry relations, Maple Leaf Foods; Ian Howcroft, vice-president, Ontario, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters; Rick Jamieson, CEO of ABS Friction Inc.; Bob Masterson, vice-president, responsible care, Chemistry Industry Association of Canada; Nancy Coulas, director of environment and energy policy, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters; Steve Gushie, president, Carquest Canada Ltd.; John Margeson, manager, business and economics, Chemistry Industry Association of Canada; Jennifer Steeves, director of industry and consumer affairs, Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association; and Norm Huebel, regional director, Ontario, Chemistry Industry Association of Canada.

We welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Yvan Baker: This morning I had a chance to meet with three students from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. I'd just like to welcome them here to the members' gallery. We have Rebecca Little, academic affairs commissioner; Philip Lloyd, vice-president, university affairs, the Alma Mater Society at Queen's University; and Shawn Murphy, vice-president, university affairs, at Trent Oshawa Student Association. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIMS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier.

The government is one that frequently suggests that it is open and transparent. In fact, recent initiatives, whether it has been Open Government or Bill 8, were designed to leave the public with the impression that your government listens. Unfortunately, with the Algonquin land claim in much of eastern Ontario, that hasn't been the case.

What's concerning here is that while there has been an agreement in principle, many people in the public, particularly in Ottawa, feel left out of the process.

Given that an entire region of Ontario will be impacted by the land claim, could the Premier provide an update on the status of public consultation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite, and I know that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will want to comment. Let me just say that my understanding of the process that has been

under way for many years, actually—I was just checking; 20 years—in order to get this modern-day land claim right has been very comprehensive. I know when I was in the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, we were working with First Nations and working with community groups and municipalities to make sure that we landed in a place that would work for everyone.

Again, I appreciate the questions from the member opposite, but this has been a decades-long process and it is still under way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No one disputes that the land claim should be between the Algonquin peoples and the federal and provincial governments. I respect that and I know all Ontarians respect that. However, no public consultation was held until after the fact and only to “infill the detail of what will be contained in a final settlement.”

I'm sure that the Premier understand that a claim of this size impacts 117,000 acres, over one million people and the city of Ottawa, including other residents and municipalities across this province and anglers, hunters, cottagers and landowners. All they're asking for is transparency in the process moving forward with the additional agreements that will be in place.

Will the Premier review the government's plan for public consultation and provide Ontarians with the opportunity for further input into this process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I say, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, in the final supplementary, will give us exactly where we're at on this.

More than 20 years of negotiations, Canada, Ontario—and remember, the Canadian government, the Ontario government and the Algonquins of Ontario have consulted with stakeholders, with legal tenure holders, with adjacent landowners, with cottage associations and members of the public. My understanding is that there has also been an advisory group that has been part of this process, that has been a parallel part of this process. So it has been very thorough.

I appreciate the concerns of the member opposite that everyone who needs to have input have that input, but I would just reassure the member opposite and, quite frankly, the people of Ontario that this process has been extremely thorough. It is ongoing. The process has not been completed at this point.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again, no one disputes the importance or length of this land claim. What is concerning, however, to people across the province, particularly those in eastern and northern Ontario, is that you're not allowing residents the opportunity to have input on harvesting, land use and waterways. This government once committed to the public that it would be consultative on negotiations of this type.

Premier, my question is: What has changed? Why won't the Premier update the public? We've given her two opportunities to do that today. Why is this govern-

ment refusing to allow public consultation on the Algonquin land claim, particularly in eastern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for the question. The fact of the matter is that this treaty negotiation has been going on for some 20 years. In the last two years, we've been approaching a draft agreement in principle. When that draft agreement in principle became available, we intensified the negotiations. There have been negotiations with municipalities. There have been negotiations with individual owners. There have been consultations with cottage owners. Anybody in the Ottawa River watershed on the Ontario side of the Ottawa River has been given an opportunity to attend these consultations.

I myself, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, have conducted three consultations here in the Legislature to which all members—Liberal, Tory and NDP—have been invited, and a number of you have attended or have sent staff. We have been open and above board with these consultations.

Mr. Crane, who is our principal negotiator, is continuing to have those negotiations—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question?

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier, moving from one set of secret and private negotiations to another. The Green Energy Act has increased hydro rates; has been harmful to wildlife, animals as well as birds; and, according to the Auditor General, has lost us jobs. For every one created, we have lost four. Many municipalities oppose wind turbine developments in their communities because the government has stripped them of their locally based decision-making power. They are now forced to host these wind turbines despite the fact that they don't want them.

The leader of the official opposition has reintroduced legislation in order to ensure that locally based decision-making is given back to municipalities across the province. The question remains: Will the government support the leader of the official opposition's motion and allow us to give back locally based decision-making to our communities?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just before I answer the first part of the question, I understand that Norm Sterling, our former member—where is he? He's somewhere. Where is—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Premier, I'm not happy with that one. I will even tell the Premier: Don't step on my job. I'm just going to do that. That's my fun opportunity. I do always want to introduce former members to give them the due respect. You've done that, but I want to make sure that people are aware of a sterling example in the west public gallery: from Carleton–Grenville in the 31st, 32nd, 33rd; Carleton

in the 34th, 35th and 36th; Lanark–Carleton in the 37th and 38th; and Carleton–Mississippi Mills in the 39th, Mr. Norm Sterling.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now that she's stepped on my job, but—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier, you're now in the middle of your answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes. I apologize.

To the member opposite: I think the member opposite knows full well that when I took on this role as Premier almost two years ago, I made it clear that we were going to change the process. That's exactly what has happened, Mr. Speaker. Mayors spoke to us, communities spoke to us, and we have changed the process so that there is increased control over decision-making by those local communities. That is built right into the process.

We are very proud of the clean renewable energy sources in this province. We're also proud of an industry that was jump-started because of our focus on clean renewable energy, but we knew that there were some changes that had to be made, and we made those changes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Norm Sterling here today was the first to tell me I should run for the Ontario PC leadership, and I support his determination.

I also supported Norm Sterling back in 2009, when we on this side of the House all unanimously opposed the Green Energy Act, which, by the way, overrides 21 different pieces of legislation, including the Ontario Heritage Act and the Planning Act, so wind turbine developers can build wind turbines in communities that don't want them without any pushback by local residents.

Now, despite what the government claims, their new procurement process promises more community input, but it hasn't really changed. Just ask the 72 unwilling host communities across this province. The only way to truly allow municipalities and their residents to have their say on wind turbine developments is to support the leader of the official opposition's bill. So will the Premier listen to rural Ontario and restore locally based decision-making once and for all?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just be clear on what the member opposite is suggesting. What she is suggesting is that we tear up contracts that are already in place, we enter processes that are already under way—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the volume of the reaction is in direct proportion to the veracity of what I'm saying. The reality is that I came into this office and said we were going to change the process. We have changed the process. There is more local control, Mr. Speaker. We have built that right into the process so that communities

can have that control that, quite frankly, I think is a good thing. I think it's a good thing for there to be that kind of local control.

I also think it's a good thing that our clean energy policies have created more than 42,000 jobs. That's a very important aspect of our economic recovery. We will continue to work with communities and make sure those decisions are made locally.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: With a response like that, there's no wonder, of course, that to find a Liberal in rural Ontario is a rare sighting indeed. One of the biggest challenges that this government has is credibility with rural and remote communities across all of Ontario. The rural-urban divide is caused by disastrous policies like the Green Energy Act.

If the Premier is serious about enfranchising rural Ontarians, she will support the leader of the official opposition's bill. It is reasonable. It is never too late to admit you are wrong. Will the Premier reverse her decision to override 21 separate pieces of legislation and make wind turbine developers go through the same processes any other developer would have to go through in the process of Ontario? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Because of the policies that we have put in place, the air is cleaner in Ontario. We have 2,700 clean tech firms that employ 65,000 people in the clean technology sector. Because of the policies that we have put in place and because of the industry—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron—Bruce, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I travelled to China with the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment and the Minister of International Trade, we were able to take clean tech companies with us and talk to leaders in China who are desperately looking for solutions to the terrible pollution problems they have in that country. We live in the world; we do not live in isolation from the rest of the world. It is our responsibility to do everything we can to have a cleaner environment. That's the side that we're on.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. People who rely on social assistance count on every penny, but when a family sees a cheque for nearly \$200 reduced to \$1.70, or a family of five gets a support cheque for \$5, that means they're stuck.

The Premier and her minister yesterday insisted that this was only an issue with overpayments and that people weren't hurt. Now we know that that's not true. Will the Premier correct her record?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I actually said that my understanding was that there was about 1% of the

500,000 cheques that go out every month where there was a problem, and I didn't actually know, in that 1% of cheques, what the issue was, whether it was underpayment or overpayment. But what I asked first thing yesterday morning was that we check into that and we make sure that people were getting money and that those situations were rectified.

I am absolutely in agreement with the member opposite that people who are dependent on the social assistance system need our support and we need to make sure they get the money that they rely on, because it is imperative that they have that every month. So the minister is working on that. You know, I wish that this technological issue hadn't happened, but the system will be better for those clients in the long run.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Some of the most vulnerable Ontarians are being hurt by a computer problem that the government was warned about last February. The Premier was saying that problems with the Social Assistance Management System are just minor glitches, but this is what people were facing: One parent was owed \$170.35 for the Transition Child Benefit, but instead she got \$1.79; a family with five children got an assistance cheque for \$5. That minor glitch might be the difference between making rent or not for that family.

Will the Premier make sure that she does absolutely everything she can to make sure all of the issues that are outstanding are addressed immediately?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely. I absolutely will do that. The minister and I have spoken this morning, and she is in communication with municipalities. She's going to be talking to some of the offices to get a handle on exactly what is happening at the local level. She has already spoken to some of the municipalities' leadership.

I am not minimizing in any way the impact on individual families. I understand that this is a very serious problem for an individual family. But we are introducing a new system that will help those individual families and all the families like them to get better service because caseworkers will be able to spend more time with them once this system is updated.

It is not acceptable that certain families would have had to undergo this problem, and we are working as hard as we can to make sure that those situations are rectified, but I want the system to work better for them in the medium and long term.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Those very same problems that the Premier has insisted are just minor glitches have meant that people's support cheques were going to their exes, to non-existent bank accounts, or to former trustees for those people.

The Premier was warned about these problems nearly a year ago. Why did she ignore the concerns that were being raised and rush into a computer system that wasn't

ready, causing havoc for hundreds and hundreds of Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There was no rushing into this process. It was a very well-thought-through process, and it has not been perfect. Every month, \$570 million worth of cheques is sent out in Ontario Works and ODSP payments—\$570 million in cheques. The outstanding overpayments, the issue that we're dealing with right now, is in the order of \$123,000.

Mostly the system worked, but there were some situations that I have already said are unacceptable, and for those families that was not a minor glitch. For those families, it was a very serious thing. We are working to rectify it. As I said, in the long term, in the medium term, the system will be better for all of those families because their workers will be able to spend more time with them.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The next question is also for the Premier. The Premier and her minister have insisted that they acted as soon as they learned about problems with their new computer system, but the government got a letter from front-line workers back in February 2014. That's nearly a year ago. In fact, I'll send it over to the Premier as a reminder.

Will the Premier come clean and admit that she was warned nearly a year ago in that letter, and that she did nothing until the whole issue blew up just a couple of days ago?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The fact is that this implementation has been ongoing, and as there have been concerns, those concerns have been addressed. It did not mean that there was no problem with the implementation; we've already acknowledged that there were problems. But I have no way of knowing whether this letter sent from OPSEU was identifying issues that actually were addressed in the implementation. My suspicion is that they were. I certainly will double-check that with the minister.

The reality is that this is a system that needed to be updated. The new system will allow caseworkers to spend more time with their clients, and that is the objective. The objective is to have better time spent with the clients.

I am absolutely clear that it's unacceptable that some families have had an issue with this implementation. We are working on making sure that it's corrected for everyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It wasn't just Ontario's front-line workers who were warning the Liberals. They were consulting with Minnesota and Maryland, two states in the US who use the same software. Last December, the governor of Minnesota wrote to the makers of SAMS and said, "Your product has made it impossible to provide Minnesotans with reasonable customer service." That sounds familiar.

Why didn't the Premier listen when red flags were being raised by other jurisdictions using the same software that failed Ontarians just so recently?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just look at this situation. This system is actually used. It's state-of-the-art software that's used by Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Germany and New York city. This system will deliver social assistance programs more efficiently. It will give clients 24/7 access to a portal that will allow them to get their case information. I think that is a very good thing, that people are able to get their case information; they can get it online at any time of day.

Kira Heineck, who is head of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, said this. She said it's "going to be a better system than the one we had before." It seems to me that that has to be the measure of the changes that government makes: Are the systems that we put in place better than what we had before? Are the implementations as smooth as they can be? Yes. Do we have to correct when there are problems? Absolutely, and that is what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact is, when the alarm was sounding about a computer problem that would mean major problems for the most vulnerable Ontarians, the Liberal government stuck its fingers in its ears.

People on social assistance have a difficult time making ends meet already, and with the holidays around the corner, it's even more difficult. The problem that was created by the Premier meant that some people got only 1% of the money that they were counting on.

The Premier is out of touch. This isn't a glitch. It's an issue that's affecting people's lives in a very, very serious way. Will the Premier immediately call her minister into her office and haul her on the carpet about why this went so wrong?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, that may be the way the leader of the third party deals with people, but on this side of the House, we work together, we find solutions, and we make sure that when there's a problem, we solve the problem. So the minister and I have had a number of conversations. I know that she is working very hard to make sure that this situation gets addressed.

Here's what I'm focused on today. I'm focused on making sure that next month, this doesn't happen; making sure that whatever the issues were, they don't happen next month; and making sure that this month—because I agree with the member opposite that this is a time when families are gathering, and we want people to have their resources—people get what they are entitled to in this next round.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, in response to the scandal brewing with your quarter-billion-dollar so-

cial assistance management system, SAMS—or scams—that resulted in \$20 million in overpayments to 17,000 individuals last week, you stated yesterday it was nothing, a small glitch that you fixed in an effective way.

The front-line staff disagree with you. They made over 6,000 calls to report problems with the new system. Again, it's your word against theirs. Clearly, they don't want you to sweep this under the rug. Minister, will you be transparent and accountable and commit to re-striking the estimates committee so we can get to the bottom of this and prevent any more nightmares for these people?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member opposite for this question. I certainly want to thank our front-line workers and our municipal partners for their very hard work on this issue. I know that they're working overtime. I want to acknowledge that adapting to the new system has been stressful, and we do thank them all for their patience.

We will continue to support local offices as they get comfortable with the new system, and they have our support. We have sent out additional staff to local offices. As we've said so many times in this House both yesterday and today, when an error was identified by those front-line workers, we immediately took action to reverse the impact of that particular error so that within 24 hours approximately 99% of payments were stopped or retracted immediately.

We know that cheques went out yesterday. I would simply like to say, in terms of those vulnerable people, if they notice an error, contact their caseworker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again, my question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Your own confidential ministry documents show that problems were identified last October, a year ago. You had to delay implementation in March and then again in July. You knew there were problems. It's obvious they weren't fixed, but you went ahead anyway. The front-line workers who knew about these problems should be able to be in estimates and identify these and testify.

Minister, if you really want to thank the front-line staff and respect them, you'll commit to re-striking the estimates committee and allowing them to testify. Minister, will you do the right thing? Will you re-strike the committee and allow those front-line workers to come and tell the truth?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: While we acknowledge that adapting to the new system can be stressful, we have been working with caseworkers and our service delivery partners to help them learn the new system and support them in this transition. When I received the letter from OPSEU and from CUPE, I actually visited a couple of offices to see the training first-hand. I attended at the Hamilton office, the municipal office. I went out to the Newmarket ODSP office. I could see that there was a need for more training, and I immediately took action and instructed my officials to ensure that everyone would feel comfortable when we went live in mid-November.

Even before implementation, the ministry made significant investments in training to help front-line staff

prepare for the transition. Over the past three years, we have been working with our service delivery partners, including front-line staff on the requirements, design and testing of the new system. We have trained some 11,000 users in approximately 257 offices, and we know that at the end of the day, we will have a very—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

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POVERTY

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Each month, Speaker, 375,000 people in this province turn to food banks. That is a 20% increase since this government launched its Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2008. When it comes to putting food on the table and a roof over the heads of every family in Ontario, the Liberals have failed to get the job done. The government's inaction has left hundreds of thousands of people in poverty.

Will the minister admit that this Liberal government has failed to address the desperate needs of Ontario families living in poverty and has failed to reduce the use of food banks in our province?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for Welland for the question. As I'm sure she's aware, we have re-struck our Poverty Reduction Strategy, under the very capable leadership of the President of the Treasury Board, to address a number of issues as they relate to poverty. In particular, I think the member should know that our government is committed to making long-term improvements to social assistance programs. It's in my mandate letter, and I will continue to work in this regard. We have made it a priority to improve the social services system and help people in need to participate fully in our communities and our economy.

Building on the rate increase—I believe you probably voted against it in the 2013 budget—our government will increase social assistance rates again in 2014, voted against twice by the member of the third party. We are adding an additional 1% for adults, Ontario Works recipients and people with disabilities receiving—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Cindy Forster: The minister can make excuses, but the numbers speak for themselves: 130,000 children rely on food banks each and every month. That's a staggering number of kids going hungry in this province. Seven hundred thousand meals are served by our amazing food banks—who do a lot of fundraising—each and every month. And the numbers of families turning to food banks for the first time increased by over 20% this year. That's the reality of poverty in our communities. That's the reality of failed Liberal policies and promises.

Will the minister admit that with no target, no timeline and no urgency to reduce poverty, this Liberal government still has no real plan to improve poverty for many Ontarians in this province?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Minister responsible for the poverty reduction strategy.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I completely reject the argument being made across the way that our Poverty Reduction Strategy is not making a real difference in the lives of people. Let's take, for example, a single mom with two kids who is working full-time at a minimum wage job. When we took office, her income would have been less than \$20,000. It is now almost \$35,000. That family is doing far, far better now because of the changes we have made. But we are by no means finished. We are just beginning our work on poverty reduction.

In our first strategy, we identified eight indicators, because poverty is also about breaking the cycle of poverty and improving outcomes for kids in schools. All of our eight indicators have demonstrated that we have made progress. Our new Poverty Reduction Strategy is looking very, very closely and strategically at the issue of homelessness. We can eliminate homelessness. We can eliminate chronic homelessness, and that is what we are going to do, Speaker.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: My question is to the Associate Minister of Health, Long-Term Care and Wellness.

Minister, the health, safety and satisfaction of our long-term-care-home residents is a high priority for this government. Indeed, the fact that you have been appointed to oversee our long-term-care homes is evidence of that. We are well aware that the government is obligated to ensure residents' rights and safety and the quality of life for those in long-term care. Part of how we do that is through the inspection system for long-term-care homes. Although I'm familiar with this process, the people of my riding of Ottawa-Orléans in Ontario may be interested in hearing about this government's inspection initiative.

Mr. Speaker, could the associate minister provide us with some background on the essential purpose of long-term-care-home inspections?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thanks to the member from Ottawa-Orléans for this very important question.

The member is quite right. The Premier has indeed charged me with providing a laser-like focus on long-term care. In particular, my number one priority is the safety of all 77,000 residents in Ontario's long-term-care homes. And it is in this context that we have committed to performing a comprehensive annual inspection of all of the 632 homes. The inspections, which are unannounced, ensure that long-term-care homes in Ontario are indeed providing the highest levels of care. The inspections serve not only to find out if there are any weaknesses, but also to work with long-term-care homes to improve our processes so that our residents continue to feel truly at home and safe in their homes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: The people of Ottawa-Orléans will be glad to know that the Associate Minister

of Health and Long-Term Care and Wellness is concerned with senior safety and is making long-term-care-home inspections her top priority. However, speaking as someone with a background in senior and long-term care, I'm apprehensive about the sheer number of inspections that have to occur in a one-year period.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the associate minister assure us that the ministry has properly trained staff to deal with the volume and to enforce these inspections at 630 long-term-care homes per year?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thanks again to the member for this important question. I want to reassure the member and the House that indeed, we do have the capacity at the ministry to conduct inspections at all 632 homes. That is why we have hired and trained additional long-term-care inspectors. In 2003, the ministry only had 59 inspectors working; today we have 170. The supplementary inspectors hired will enable my ministry to ensure that every single long-term-care-home inspection is scheduled by the end of 2014.

My ministry has taken concrete steps to ensure the accuracy and depth of new resident quality inspections. These inspections are resident-focused, with an emphasis placed on quality of care and quality of life. All inspections will place a high importance on interviewing the residents, family council and staff of the establishment.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Minister, yesterday your government levied a new tax grab in the form of service fees to hunters and anglers of this province, an increase of 23% in certain instances. Minister, this isn't a basic one-fee-for-all-services but a fee for each and every service. It means \$2 is added to each of a multitude of licences a hunter-angler must purchase, such as an outdoors card, various fishing and game licences, and tags for the harvest. This comes in addition to the yearly price increases to licences. This isn't a simple \$2 increase, as you like to portray.

Minister, you justify these new fees based on your claim that the special purpose account is declining. However, nobody knows the details of the special purpose account because you're ignoring legislation and refusing to table the documents.

Minister, instead of introducing new fees, why will you not release the details of the special purpose account to show hunters and anglers how their money is being spent?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I thank the member for the question. I would say that when the Conservatives brought in the special purpose account, the intention of the account was to be funded to the tune of about \$100 million annually. About 66%, or \$66 million, of that would come from the licences and fees that were paid by hunters and anglers in the community across the province of Ontario. It's our intention to continue to try and meet that percentage base from the hunters and fishers from the

fees that they pay. If we don't do that, the very programming that the account was intended to provide for can't be met.

I know that the member opposite has a very keen interest in that. I know he's had briefings where he's asked about expenditures from this account within his own riding.

It's the intent of this account to be able to continue to meet that mandate, providing hunting and fishing, good programming, and fish and wildlife management in the province of Ontario. That's the intention, Speaker. I would say as well—well, I'll provide the further information on this in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, I've asked the questions; I just want an answer.

Minister, if only the hunters and anglers knew how their money is being spent. I've recently just found out that over 14%—or \$9.9 million—of the special purpose account money that is to be used in the management of resources like deer and fish goes to administering the burdensome licensing system that your government has created. Over half of that money goes to the United States, none of which is invested in our economy or resource management. In fact, over the course of the contract you signed, over \$34.12 million of the special-purpose account will go to the United States. Instead of finding efficiencies in the administration of the system, you create new fees.

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Minister, hunters and anglers, like most Ontarians, do not trust this government with their money. Why will you not show some good faith, repeal the new fees, release the special purpose account documents and bring the licensing system home to Canada where it belongs?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Before the fees that the member refers to came into effect on December 1 this year, there was a significant period of consultation that was undertaken, going back at least one to one and a half years ago. The decision was made then that the fees would come into effect on December 1.

It's not as if these fees just came forward and were forced down the throats of anybody. There was significant consultation undertaken, and I know that OFAH came forward with the view that, rather than having a little bit every year, perhaps this was the approach they would prefer on a go-forward basis.

The member raises a fair point: I said in a response to a question he asked last week that those reports he has been asking about will be brought forward in very short order. I can't speak to why they haven't been brought forward in the past over three years; it's our intention to have them tabled within the Legislature in the very near future.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: This past weekend, I met with people in my riding of Windsor West to hear stories about how CCAC service cuts have impacted their lives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister, please?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Sorry. To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The round table was hosted by our leader, Andrea Horwath, and I was accompanied by my colleagues from Essex and Windsor-Tecumseh. We heard from people like Sandra Havens and Sharon Mueller, who had their home care services reduced or cut off completely. These are the same service cuts that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has been denying for weeks.

Now that the minister can no longer deny that these service cuts are affecting real people, will he finally commit to ceasing further reductions in CCAC services and restore services to all those affected by the cuts?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm aware of the leader of the third party hosting this meeting and rally this past weekend in Windsor and speaking to some of the individuals concerned. It's unfortunate for this meeting that the CCAC was not invited to attend as well, so that they could actually hear some of these concerns from the public.

On November 10, I know that the member opposite and two of her colleagues met with the CEO of the local Erie St. Clair CCAC and talked about the plans going forward to address the deficit. It's important to understand the challenge that the Erie St. Clair CCAC is facing. There was a review done by the LHIN and by the CCAC some time ago, leading to the projection of a deficit, and part of that was evidence that showed that the level of nursing services provided by Erie St. Clair was actually 33%—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The same day that the CCAC received an influx of funding, people in my riding continued to be told that their services were being reduced or cut off. Peggy Hoover was told that the CCAC would no longer be administering IV treatment to her diabetic husband, and that this duty now fell to her. Sandra Havens, who suffers from MS, was told last month that her assistance from the community care access centre was being completely cut off.

While I'm relieved that the CCAC is less burdened by debt, the issue has always been more than spreadsheets. Will the minister apologize to my constituents and commit to providing them with adequate home care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite knows that I'm working very closely with the LHIN, as well as the CCAC. But I mentioned that when Erie St. Clair did the analysis, they found that the level of nursing services was actually one third higher than for the province, despite similar demographics. In fact, for patients who are in the mild needs category, it's twice as high as it is in the provincial average.

The CCAC CEO—responsibly, I think—undertook a review to see how they could bring that CCAC more in sync with the rest of the province in terms of what is

being provided, and in fact it was on my instruction last week that an additional \$4.1 million was provided to the CCAC. That actual process was in process long before the member opposite raised her concerns here in the Legislature. We'll continue to make sure they get back to balance, and it may take an additional year to do that. We're going to make sure that patient care does not suffer.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. Minister, Ontario is consistently ranked the number one province for immigrants to call home. Many of my constituents tell me that one of the biggest challenges facing new immigrants is the transition to a new workforce. For many highly skilled newcomers, the qualifications needed in their field differ from their home country. In order to start providing for their families and integrating into their communities, these newcomers need assistance to find a job in their field.

Minister, could you tell the House what action Ontario is taking to help our immigrants transition?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Brampton West for asking. As an immigrant myself, I know how critical it is for Ontario to develop programs that will help newcomers. Ontario recognizes that nearly three of every four working-age immigrants arriving in Ontario have a post-secondary education. When we can effectively engage them in our workforce, everyone will benefit. This is why we have 92 active bridge training projects in place to help highly skilled newcomers access licensure and employment in their field. So far, our projects have assisted close to 50,000 newcomers in over 100 professions to continue their career in Ontario. We are proud that the Ontario bridge training program is working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Minister, for the answer.

The minister is not the only immigrant here today. In fact, many members from all sides of the House came here from another country or are the children of Canadian immigrants. We should be able to agree that newcomers are a vital part of Ontario's economic and cultural fibre. They need and deserve our help to integrate and adapt, particularly in the workforce, but instead of what should be a united front, we too often see newcomers being treated as a second priority.

Speaker, will the minister tell us what the government of Ontario is doing to ensure that the programs newcomers need are being protected?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. Our bridge training programs help highly skilled immigrants from a variety of fields, and we are committed to continuing these services. We have budgeted to contribute over \$63 million over three years. In 2014 alone, we provided over \$26 million to these programs. Without this funding, bridge training services would not

be able to operate. We are making sure that highly skilled immigrants from around the world can obtain the fast-track training and customized services needed to quickly and effectively transition into our workforce.

Ontario, Canada is the land of hope and opportunities for newcomers. Our goal is to help them succeed because we know that when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, on the same day the Erie St. Clair LHIN gave millions in bailout dollars to one group, they told another group that they need to prove their worth. The community care access centre has managed to run a \$5-million deficit only eight months into this current year. The CCAC CEO's salary has jumped 37% in the last five years, and the number of employees making more than \$100,000 has more than doubled to 21 from nine during that same time period. This agency was given a multi-million-dollar bailout. Now, compare that with the Leamington District Memorial Hospital, one of the province's most efficient small hospitals, whose obstetrics unit's future is unsure.

My question, Minister, is this: Why is the Leamington District Memorial Hospital left hanging while the CCAC is given bailout after bailout?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I don't know how the member opposite can say that the CEO's salary has increased that dramatically over five years since she only started at the CCAC in May of this year. But I have to say that, apart from the fact that Bill 8, which is making its way through the Legislature, addresses this specific issue, I think one part of the question that the member opposite asked, which is the issue of executive compensation—and I do want to say as well that the proportion of CCAC funding that goes to executive or management-level compensation has actually decreased substantially since 2007. The administrative costs that are attributed to our CCACs have also declined over a similar period. So we're taking those steps and putting them in place but, importantly, Bill 8, I think, is going to give us additional tools so that we can address that issue of executive compensation.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Minister, back in December 2012, the Erie St. Clair LHIN was forced to postpone knee and hip replacement surgeries because it had used up its budget. The same scenario happened last year, and this year we're waiting with bated breath just to see what happens.

In 2013, the CCAC had to ask for an additional \$4.5 million in funding, and now the CCAC is forcing your hand, forcing the Ministry of Health to actually give them a \$4.1-million bailout. Yet Leamington District Memorial Hospital remains with a \$2-million shortfall, forcing obstetrics to close.

Leamington residents cannot understand why this government has millions to spare each time the LHIN or

CCAC runs out of money, but can't spare the needed funding for the highly efficient Leamington District Memorial Hospital obstetrics clinic. My question, Minister, is this: Why are your appointed health bureaucrats held to a different standard of accountability in the rural hospitals—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I guess what I'm beginning to understand is that the third party wants an increase to the budget to the CCAC, and the official opposition wants to see a decrease to the funding to the CCAC in Erie St. Clair.

With regard to the Leamington hospital specifically, I know that the member opposite has been involved and concerned about the impact on potential changes to the obstetrics unit there in the hospital. He does know that the Leamington District Memorial Hospital is working closely with the regional LHIN—it's the LHIN, not the CCAC—to look at various options. There was a meeting on November 27 as well between the hospital as well as the LHIN and community members to enable all sides, really, to speak to and address this important issue of obstetrical services. Roughly half of the residents in the Leamington area currently choose to deliver in Windsor at the regional hospital already, but I'm committed to making sure that we have an open and transparent process led by our LHIN, overseen by the ministry, with community involvement and certainly with the hospital, to determine what the best outcome should be.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the President of the Treasury Board: Yesterday, this government rammed through amendments to Bill 8. That's 11 pieces of distinct legislation all in one Harper-style omnibus bill. Liberal committee members voted against granting the children's advocate investigative powers over his entire mandate. They voted to open up questions over the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to court rulings. Shockingly, they voted against making the patient ombudsman a true and independent ombudsman. They won't be able to investigate infectious disease outbreaks that happen in private clinics, when we know that this happens.

All of this happened in fewer than three hours. How can this government say they're open and transparent and then ram through legislation that is so deeply flawed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted with the progress of Bill 8. As you know, it's been a long time coming. We introduced this legislation long before it came in this form and, unfortunately, it was blocked when the NDP forced an unnecessary election.

So we're moving forward. I want to thank the committee members for having done an excellent job. They actually accepted amendments from the opposition parties, and I was very pleased to see that the bill actually was improved thanks to the work of the members opposite, so that's good news.

What we're doing is moving forward with important accountability legislation. It has been discussed for many, many, many, many months because it has been before the House before. I'm pleased that this bill has gone through committee and will be back in the House very soon for third reading.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Treasury Board president: You called the election, just for the record. This government can say—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Order. Start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Finish, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So this government can say what they want about Bill 8, but it won't change this fact: Yesterday they voted to limit the powers of the child advocate. Yesterday they limited powers in oversight over the patient ombudsman, a \$52-billion budget item. And they have actually opened the door for oversight by invitation only in the health care sector. Mr. Speaker, how can this government say they're open and transparent when they've created a patient ombudsman designed to fail?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I am actually looking into a nomination for the Stephen Leacock award for MPPs, because that might be the funniest line we have heard in this House in a long time, Speaker.

I'm very pleased, as I said, that Bill 8 is moving forward. Actually, I correct my record: The legislation around Ornge oversight has been before the House for three years; we couldn't get it passed. So I'm delighted that this necessary legislation is being passed.

Let's just remind ourselves what we're getting in this legislation. We're expanding the role of the Ontario Ombudsman to include municipalities, school boards, publicly funded universities. We're establishing a patient ombudsman. This is a fantastic step forward, Speaker. We're giving the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth new powers, new investigative powers. That's very good.

I know you're trying to justify why you won't support the bill, but I tell you that this is very, very good and important legislation.

IMPAIRED DRIVERS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels, le Honourable Yasir Naqvi.

Speaker, as you'll appreciate, Ontario has, and continues to aspire to have, some of the safest roads in North America. But even so, with the holiday season fast approaching, my constituents in Etobicoke North, and Ontarians across the province, are worried about the potential road safety related to impaired driving caused by drugs or alcohol, or often a judicious combination of both.

It's unfortunate to say this, but during the past decade in Ontario more than 2,000 lives have been lost and more than 50,000 people have been injured in collisions involving impaired driving. These numbers are intolerable, and there is absolutely no room for impaired driving of any kind in this province.

Recently, I attended I kickoff event for the 2014-15 holiday RIDE campaign to remind my own constituents about the importance of this issue.

Will the minister please explain to this House some of the details that we're taking to the discourage the very serious problem of impaired driving in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I first want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for attending the kickoff event in his riding for the holiday RIDE campaign. The RIDE campaign is a year-round initiative that seeks to discourage impaired driving and catch drivers who drive while intoxicated. During the holiday season, police in Ontario conduct more RIDE spot checks.

Our government is committed to supporting this important initiative and to keeping Ontarians safe from impaired drivers. Since 2008 and 2009, we have doubled the RIDE grant program funding, from \$1.2 million to \$2.4 million annually, to support more spot check activities across the province. During last year's campaign, 1,059 impaired drivers were taken off the road, making our streets that much safer.

I look forward to providing more information on specific initiatives we have taken in law to make our roads safer as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I believe all members of this chamber will be encouraged to hear about the success of last year's holiday RIDE program and about the number of impaired drivers taken off Ontario's roads, but I think it's clear and objective to note that our government's targeted funding of the RIDE program, thus increasing the number of spot checks, has saved lives.

However, while they are very important in catching impaired drivers, Speaker, RIDE checks are only one tool that police have to fight this problem. Unfortunately the statistics continue to demonstrate that many people in Ontario find themselves, or choose to find themselves, driving while intoxicated. Minister, would you please share with us what else our government is doing to prevent people from drinking and driving these holidays?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I agree with the member 100% that the RIDE program is one way of making sure that people are not driving while intoxicated, but unfortunately, the reality is that some people do still drink and drive during the holiday season, which is totally unacceptable.

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That is why we have some of the toughest measures in North America to further discourage impaired driving, including things like immediate 90-day driver licence suspensions and ignition interlock devices.

Our government has also made penalties for impaired driving even stiffer. As of December 1, 2010, individuals can have their vehicles impounded for seven days on the spot if their blood alcohol level is above the legal limit.

Speaker, I ask all of our members, through you, to keep a vigilant eye, to encourage friends and neighbours not to drink and drive, and make sure we have a safe holiday season and a merry Christmas.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Minister, winter has started, and areas from Buffalo to the east coast have already been hit with massive storms. But here in Ontario, municipalities still haven't seen a single dollar of assistance for the ice storm that hit them a year ago. It turns out that the delay is that your ministry took nine months to produce an application, and it didn't give them training on the forms until 11 months after the storm.

Minister, is this your idea of emergency assistance?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we don't control the weather. I'm tempted to say that it's a federal responsibility, but that would be rude, so I wouldn't say that.

I can say that when the ice storm hit, we moved very, very quickly to meet with a number of municipalities to put in place an unprecedented allocation of \$190 million to help respond to that. We met with AMO and the big-city mayors and others around how we would determine the distribution of that. We got some good information, some good guidance from that, and we used that information to frame the approach around the application for assistance.

There were a number of municipalities' conservation authorities that qualified. They are working at getting the information together. As that information comes in, we will respond as quickly as we can to get that money out to our beleaguered municipalities and conservation authorities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Well, Minister, according to your ministry, you've only received, so far, one completed application, and we're less than a month away from the deadline.

Minister, that's not the only problem with this program. You hired an Alberta company to help with the accounting and the processing of 58 municipal claims and your claim to the federal government, at a cost of \$2.8 million, so they are getting \$46,000 per application to review in this process. A year later, not a single dollar has gone to help municipalities, but nearly \$3 million went to an Alberta company. Would you call that a great success of the disaster program?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I think the disaster relief program is going to be a great success precisely because we're insisting on accountability and making sure that—the party on the opposite side often calls for accountability and transparency, but when we practise it—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Oxford asked the question.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —largely in response to the federal regulations—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, come to order—third time. And you asked the question.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I have a lot of respect for the member, particularly when he lets me answer the question.

There are accountability mechanisms that are part of this program. Every single dollar that's being paid to the accounting firm assisting us in this important task will be retrievable from the federal government, and the regulations and accountability mechanisms in place are largely as a result of the federal requirements.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Health.

In just a few minutes, at noon, caregivers and hospital staff will rally in Temiskaming Shores against this government's cuts to our local hospital.

It has been reported that the Temiskaming Shores hospital will have to cut 18,000 nursing hours, cut cleaning hours, cut their operating room hours by half and close the cafeteria. It's hard to know what's going to be left.

Why is this minister pushing ahead with cuts to our hospital? Northern patients deserve more care, not less.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We're not making cuts to Temiskaming Hospital, but I do understand the concerns that are being raised by the citizens of that area, and they're concerns that I'm taking very seriously. In fact, I've met with the North East LHIN myself. The deputy of my ministry will be travelling as well to meet with the North East LHIN leadership shortly to understand better the concerns in the Temiskaming area and the catchment of that important hospital.

We currently are funding the hospital to the tune of \$19 million this year. As the member opposite knows, a new CEO was hired in February of this year. She has initiated a voluntary operational review to identify areas of improvement in the hospital—I think something we should all get behind and agree with. My ministry and the LHIN will continue to work closely with the LHIN to find a positive solution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: We know what the government has been doing to small and rural hospitals: Their budgets have been frozen for three years. But when you freeze a budget for three years, that is effectively a cut, because nothing else has been frozen. There's no way that the government can axe nursing hours, cut operating time by half and still expect the patients to be served, especially—and I'm glad the minister recognized northern Ontario—when the closest full-service hospital is at least two or three hours away.

Once again, Minister, do the right thing: Look at the effects on the hospital and act, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: That's exactly what we're doing. In fact, apart from what the member opposite is alleging, we're actually investing more in our small and rural hospitals. Our small and rural hospitals, because of their unique characteristics, were exempt from the quality improvement—the funding transformations; not from the quality, but from the funding transformations that we've made over the last few years. We've created a dedicated \$20-million fund which goes specifically to our small and rural hospitals, as well. In fact, since 2003, we've invested more than 115 million extra dollars—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Deputy House leader can move his chair, but he cannot hide.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —specifically to our small and rural hospitals. These are hospitals that we take very seriously. They provide an incredible high-quality service to their communities. We're working closely with them. We know our LHINs take this as seriously as I do and as my ministry does. We'll continue to work with Temiskaming.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Catherine Fife: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd just like to correct my record. I mentioned in the first part of my question—infectious diseases happen in private clinics. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I invite all members of the House to join me in welcoming three special guests to the House: Mejjindarpal Kaur, who is the international legal director for United Sikhs; Ranbir Singh, who is the Canadian director for United Sikhs; and Gurpreet Singh, who is a teacher and a reservist with the Canadian Forces. United Sikhs is a United Nations-recognized organization doing humanitarian work around the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

DEFERRED VOTES

CHILD CARE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES DE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to

amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, the Education Act and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 10, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et apportant des modifications corrélatives et connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Will members please take their seats.

On December 1, Ms. Sandals moved third reading of Bill 10. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	French, Jennifer K.	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Gates, Wayne	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul
Baker, Yvan	Gretzky, Lisa	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Campbell, Sarah	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
Dickson, Joe	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Dong, Han	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Duguid, Brad	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Forster, Cindy	McMahon, Eleanor	
Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Hillier, Randy	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 70; the nays are 23.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

BETTER BUSINESS CLIMATE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT À INSTAURER UN CLIMAT PLUS PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 7, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014.

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On November 18, Mr. Duguid moved second reading of Bill 7. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm
Anderson, Granville	Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Nicholls, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hudak, Tim	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Hunter, Mitzie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Campbell, Sarah	Jones, Sylvia	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Clark, Steve	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Smith, Todd
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dong, Han	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Duguid, Brad	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Dunlop, Garfield	Mauro, Bill	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor	Yakabuski, John
Forster, Cindy	McMeekin, Ted	Yurek, Jeff
Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
French, Jennifer K.	Milczyn, Peter Z.	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 92; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 27, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GIVING TUESDAY

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today to announce the kickoff of the Giving Tuesday campaign in my community of Sarnia-Lambton. Giving Tuesday is a new movement that is all about giving and volunteering, and will take place each year on the Tuesday following Cyber Monday.

Using social media messaging, you will be able to support charities in the community through text donations. From December 2 through December 31, people can make a \$5, \$10, \$20 or \$25 donation by texting SLgives to 20222. Donations can also be made through the website at www.sarnialambtongives.ca.

In my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, 26 Lambton county charities are joining this movement for giving and volunteering. Together they have set a goal of raising \$100,000. This is the largest show of support for the Giving Tuesday movement of any community across the country.

I encourage all of my colleagues in the Legislature today to participate in their local Giving Tuesday campaign. I challenge all the municipal councils in Sarnia-Lambton to join in and support the great charitable work done in our community.

Again, show your support by texting SLgives to 20222 or visiting www.sarnialambtongives.ca.

MUNICIPALITIES

Ms. Catherine Fife: Today, I would like to congratulate the newly elected mayors and city councillors in Waterloo region and across Ontario who took office on Monday.

I would like to congratulate the new faces: Dave Schneider and Sarah Marsh, elected in Kitchener; Bob Mavin in Waterloo; Karen Redman and Wayne Wettlaufer are familiar faces but new to regional council. I would also like to congratulate the new mayor of Kitchener, Berry Vrbanovic; and Waterloo's new mayor, Dave Jaworsky. As well, I would like to thank all of the re-elected members of council and regional council. Finally, I would like to congratulate all of the newly elected public and Catholic school board trustees, along

with the returning trustees, who will work together for a stronger education system in our region.

I wish them the very best as they embark on their important positions to represent their constituents at the closest level of government to the people.

Municipal councils play such a vital role in our society. The services provided by municipalities directly affect the lives of citizens and their communities. Ontarians rely on water, roads and waste removal. And, of course, what could be more important than public education?

In the 2014 budget, the government announced accelerated cuts of \$35 million to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund for 2015; 245 of the 388 municipalities that receive OMPF support will face a reduction in funding. In July, AMO asked that the government defer the cuts to the OMPF.

We must remember the importance of working with municipalities and their elected councils in order to ensure Ontario's shared prosperity. Let's start by offering our congratulations, and let's end by respecting local governments.

LARRY WALKER

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Larry Walker was known as an exceptional athlete, his family's Superman, a hero and the ultimate family man. He was humble, well known, well liked and well respected. Larry was a fireman.

Born and raised in the country with four brothers and three sisters, Larry was a friend to all. He was married to his best friend for 66 years and made sure that his family wanted for nothing. He built his home from used lumber and fieldstones as he began a remarkable career serving the citizens of Cambridge.

Larry was a police officer for eight years before embarking on a 30-year career as a firefighter in Cambridge. He was known as "the king of ping," playing Ping-Pong at the station between calls. He retired in 1988 and, sadly, passed away from occupational disease in 2013.

I met his son Randy and granddaughter Alex at the tribute to the fallen ceremony held at Queen's Park last week. Randy was very emotional as he accepted a plaque from the Premier.

Fittingly, Randy's dad was honoured in Colorado at the Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial, and the firefighter memorial and tribute to the fallen ceremonies at Queen's Park.

Randy could not be more proud of his father Larry Walker's exemplary service to the citizens of Cambridge. Neither could we.

DR. DOUGLAS A. MacINTOSH CANCER CLINIC

Mr. Todd Smith: The oncology clinic at Belleville General Hospital finally has a name, and it's a fitting tribute to the man who made cancer care a reality in

Quinte. The new state-of-the-art clinic, which opened in 2011, comes from extremely humble beginnings, and it's the vision of Dr. Douglas MacIntosh.

Back in the 1960s, cancer treatment simply wasn't taking place in small community hospitals like Belleville. Residents in Prince Edward and Hastings counties had to travel to Kingston or Toronto to get their chemotherapy. But in 1972, Dr. Mac found a drafty room just outside the emergency room in Belleville General Hospital; he affectionately described it on Saturday as the broom closet. That's where he and his staff—there were three of them, actually: Nurse Donna Holoway, Sylvia Buskard and Ruth Webber—took care of cancer patients at Belleville General Hospital. The first cancer and hematology clinic was a very small organization, as you can see. Doug also mentioned his close working relationship with Belleville doctor Bruce Cronk on Saturday.

From the day that clinic team started their work, the atmosphere lent itself to a lot of great camaraderie. There were long hours, there were heartbreaking moments, and there were some great successes in that oncology unit as well.

Along the way, there has been a lot of progress made in our health care system.

When Dr. MacIntosh joined the medical profession early in the 1960s, his goal, like that of so many others, was to cure cancer. Now he is actually a cancer patient at that oncology clinic that bears his name.

The new 10-treatment-chair facility couldn't be named for a more fitting or a more deserving person than Dr. Douglas MacIntosh.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to start by thanking this government for taking the first step in ensuring that there is a bright and prosperous future at the Fort Frances mill by undertaking negotiations with the mill's present owner to preserve its assets this winter. This is the first hurdle we needed to clear to ensure that negotiations may continue so that we may find a successive buyer and see a restart in the near future.

But more needs to be done to ensure that a deal can be struck, and this government has a crucial role to play in the future success of the Fort Frances mill. What is widely seen as the next step is making changes to wood allocation, and the wood allocation of the Crossroute Forest, such that it maximizes the benefit to the people of the Rainy River district. The ball is in this government's court.

With a clearly stated call from the people of the Rainy River district, where the Crossroute Forest is located, as well as recent media reports that the present wood licence holder supports a change in wood allocation, it is difficult to understand what the minister's holdup is. People across the country are keeping a very close eye on this situation to see how it plays out. Time is of the essence, and we are collectively asking this government to make the necessary changes to wood allocation that will allow

a future deal to be struck to get the Fort Frances mill operational once again.

PORTUGUESE CULTURAL CENTRE OF MISSISSAUGA

Mr. Bob Delaney: In the year 1974, a group of visionaries from the Portuguese community in Mississauga came together to create a centre for the Portuguese Canadian community as an outlet for the cultivation of Portuguese language, culture and tradition. The centre plays a crucial role for first-generation Portuguese Canadians as they arrive in Canada, and for second- and subsequent-generation Portuguese Canadians, to give them exposure to their parents' and grandparents' heritage, culture, values, tradition, and certainly food.

The first Portuguese Cultural Centre of Mississauga was located on Dundas Street, and it has since moved to Streetsville. The Portuguese Cultural Centre of Mississauga is an active participant and a terrific pavilion at Carassauga, Mississauga's annual festival of cultures. Each year I always enjoy visiting the Portuguese pavilion and certainly indulging in the lovely Portuguese food and wine and enjoying the entertainment.

On November 22, I had the pleasure of being a guest at the annual Portuguese gala dinner in Mississauga. The milestone dinner celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Portuguese Cultural Centre of Mississauga. I'd like to congratulate Gilberto Moniz, soon to retire, the president of the Portuguese Cultural Centre of Mississauga, and the board of directors for putting together a wonderful event showcasing music and entertainment native to Portugal, accompanied by good food and great company.

MUNICIPALITY OF CALLANDER

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm bringing two issues from the municipality of Callander.

They have concerns about the discovery of unauthorized gillnets in Lake Nipissing, which undermine efforts by partners such as the Lake Nipissing Stakeholders Association and Nipissing First Nation to increase the declining walleye population on the lake. This has an impact on everyone around the lake, especially those whose livelihood depends on it.

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On July 22, council passed a resolution requesting that "the Ministry of Natural Resources provide additional resources dedicated towards consistent enforcement of regulations and daily catch limits, including unauthorized netting."

At the same time, Callander council also expressed concern about the impact of the Ontera sale, which will result in 66 lost jobs in northern Ontario. They're concerned that the government "has not communicated or announced a long-term plan for the ONTC or concrete plans for investment" in the ONTC. Their resolution "requests that the government of Ontario immediately consult with local municipalities, stakeholders and

regional economic development organizations to develop a long-term strategic plan to sustain and grow the ONTC and minimize job loss.”

Speaker, we look forward to the government’s response to northerners.

SENIORS COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM

Ms. Soo Wong: I’m pleased to rise today to speak about the seniors community grant. The seniors community grant is the first grant in Ontario dedicated solely to seniors. The program focuses on projects in the non-profit sector that promote greater social inclusion, volunteerism, education and community engagement for seniors across Ontario. In its inaugural year, a total of 179 projects were recommended for approval. These recommended projects have an impact on 43,000 seniors across Ontario.

In my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, two organizations will be receiving funding from the Seniors Community Grant Program. The Mon Sheong Foundation will offer social and cultural programs for seniors in the community. The Happy Time Community Association will conduct dance and musical performances in the various seniors’ homes and apartments across the city of Toronto.

Given the overwhelming response by the community this inaugural year, I’m confident the Seniors Community Grant Program will continue to expand in the years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the minister responsible for seniors affairs for his championing for seniors across Ontario and keeping them safe, healthy and active in their golden years.

INSIDE AND OUT CONFERENCE

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Mr. Speaker and members of this House, I want to tell you about a unique conference that was convened to mark World AIDS Day, which, as you know, was yesterday. Called Inside and Out, it focused on the impact of HIV on people who have come into contact with the correctional system, its institutions and service agencies that serve them.

The conference discussed recent research and interventions in treating and preventing the spread of HIV, hepatitis C, STIs and other similar diseases. Included were experts from CSC, Queen’s University, Ontario HIV Treatment Network, Hotel Dieu Hospital and Kingston General Hospital. It outlined strategies to engage with affected prisoners during and after incarceration. Inspiring presentations also examined mental health, addictions, end-of-life and indigenous care models within correctional facilities.

This conference was eight months in the planning, and considerable congratulations are due to the organizers: the Ontario HIV Treatment Program—funded, I’m proud

to say, by the government’s long-term strategic response to the AIDS epidemic.

I would also like to highlight and applaud the incredible hard work and dedication of John MacTavish, Diane Smith-Merrill and the amazing staff and volunteers at HIV/AIDS Regional Services Kingston, who collaborated and volunteered to make the conference a considerable success. You have done so well in our community for 25 years. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara Falls on a point of order.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Speaker, I’d like to welcome a couple of young ladies from my riding: Kaitlin Cain and Jessica Turgeon. They’ve been touring Queen’s Park all day, so I’d like to welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 8, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts / *Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la responsabilisation et la transparence du secteur public et des députés par l’édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur la rémunération des cadres du secteur parapublic et la modification de diverses lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 18, 2014, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Good afternoon, Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to

put forward a motion without notice regarding the mandate of the temporary Information and Privacy Commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a question just before we agree: Is there not supposed to be a time limit on this?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will sit down for a moment and ask for a short opportunity for clarity.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now we'll get back at it. I am all for working together.

I will now hear the motion from the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you for your patience. Thanks to the third party House leader for the interjection.

I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Brian Beamish, current temporary Information and Privacy Commissioner, to continue to act as temporary Information and Privacy Commissioner until June 30, 2015, or the effective date of appointment of a permanent commissioner on the address of the assembly under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, whichever comes first.";

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that an humble address be presented—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Agreed? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

FISHING REGULATIONS

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary is printed each year by the Ministry of Natural Resources and distributed to recreational fishermen throughout the province to inform them of all the relevant seasons, limits, licence requirements and other regulations; and

"Whereas this valuable document is readily available for anglers to keep in their residence, cottage, truck, boat, trailer or on their person to be fully informed of the current fishing regulations; and

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"Whereas the MNR has recently and abruptly drastically reduced the distribution of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary such that even major licence issuers and large fishing retailers are limited to one case of regulations per outlet; and

"Whereas anglers do not always have access to the Internet to view online regulations while travelling or in remote areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the production of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary to previous years' quantities such that all anglers have access to a copy and to distribute them accordingly."

I'll send this to the table with Nicole.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition here signed by hundreds of people across the Rainy River district which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's crown forests belong to the people of Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario government has a duty and an obligation to preserve and create jobs;

"Whereas ministers of the crown have a duty and an obligation to act in the interest of the whole of the province;

"Whereas the forestry licences and wood cutting rights in Fort Frances should be allocated to the local processing facility and employ local workers;

"Whereas in May 2014, the holder of the sustainable forest licence (SFL) for the Crossroute Forest ceased operation, yet retains control of the wood basket; and

"Whereas freezing winter weather will soon destroy the assets within the processing facility if it is not heated, or resumes operation immediately;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to stop delaying and take immediate action to ensure the wood rights of the Crossroute Forest remain tied to the continued operation and benefit of the Fort Frances mill."

I wholeheartedly support this, will affix my signature and give it to the page to deliver.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic

peoples to our province's social, economic and multi-cultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Albany to bring to the desk.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in rural Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers, and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Tyler.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Joshua to bring down to the Clerks.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here signed by hundreds of people from east Toronto. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly-funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto (Beaches-East York and Toronto-Danforth) and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school (grades 7-12) yet in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

"Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 7 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools, and yet, not a single French secondary school has opened in east Toronto; and

"Whereas the commissioner of French-language services stated in a report in June 2011 that '... time is running out to address the serious shortage of at least one new French-language school at the secondary level in the eastern part of the city of Toronto'; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education and that the various components of our education system should be aligned to serve the needs of students; and

"Whereas parents and students from both French Catholic and French public elementary schools in east Toronto are prepared to find common ground across all language school systems to secure space for a French-language secondary school in east Toronto;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or

shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school (grades 7-12) in the community by September 2015, so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live.”

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, and I will leave it with page Jenny.

ASTHMA

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'll be brief to make up some time here.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on October 9, 2012, 12-year-old Ryan Gibbons unnecessarily died of an asthma attack at school;

“Whereas one in five students in Ontario schools has asthma; and

“Whereas asthma is a disease that can be controlled; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of Ontario schools to ensure asthma-safe environments;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Education to take measures to protect pupils with asthma by ensuring all school boards put in place asthma-management plans based on province-wide standards.”

Mr. Speaker, I support this petition, and Bill 20 takes care of this action the minister should take.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: “Our trees: Our jobs!”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's crown forests belong to the people of Ontario;

“Whereas the Ontario government has a duty and an obligation to preserve and create jobs;

“Whereas ministers of the crown have a duty and an obligation to act in the interest of the whole of the province;

“Whereas the forestry licences and wood cutting rights in Fort Frances should be allocated to the local processing facility and employ local workers;

“Whereas in May 2014, the holder of the sustainable forest licence (SFL) for the Crossroute Forest ceased operation, yet retains control of the wood basket; and

“Whereas freezing winter weather will soon destroy the assets within the processing facility if it is not heated, or resumes operation immediately;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to stop delaying and take immediate action to ensure the wood rights of the Crossroute Forest remain tied to the continued operation and benefit of the Fort Frances mill.”

LEGAL AID

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: “Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid

clients within the community of nearly 800,000 population; and

“Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

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“Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the 2012-13 budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner.”

I affix my name to this and give it to page Hannah.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: An oldie but goodie here:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Auditor General of Ontario defines the global adjustment charge on hydro bills as ‘mostly consisting of the difference between the market price and the price paid to generators as set by the board for OPG or under contract with the government or the OPA’; and

“Whereas the Auditor General says the global adjustment has been rising steadily over the last few years and is expected to continue to rise...; and

“Whereas the Liberal government's 2010 fall economic statement stated that hydro bills are expected to rise 46% by 2015, and that new renewable power generation would account for 56% of that increase; and

“Whereas small to mid-sized businesses across Ontario are seeing the global adjustment portion of their monthly hydro bills increase significantly to the point that it is now larger than the actual energy portion of their bills; and

“Whereas many of those businesses are now delaying investment or hiring, or both, and considering either closing or moving outside of the province of Ontario as a result of delivered-to-market industrial energy rates that are now the highest in North America;

“We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reverse course on its expensive energy policy by cancelling the feed-in tariff (FIT) subsidies and treating Ontario's energy as an economic development tool so that it once again is a competitive advantage for Ontario in retaining and attracting jobs and investment.”

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Albany.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I strongly support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Elijah.

MIDWIFERY

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas midwifery care in Ontario is perfectly aligned with transforming the health care system toward quality care that uses resources effectively;

"Whereas midwives, who are primary care providers, ensure the provision of the right care, in the right place, and at the right time;

"Whereas the Minister of Health expressed commitment to work closely with midwives to ensure they have the support they need to carry out their work as well as grow the profession;

"Whereas midwifery in Ontario is currently being destabilized by negotiations that have broken down, a contract that expired on March 31, 2014, and a compensation structure that has not addressed pay equity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government resume negotiations with the Association of Ontario Midwives and enable midwives to continue to provide the highest standard of primary ... care to women and their families."

I sign this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have petitions from the people of Nickel Belt that read as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of

price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to "mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I couldn't agree more and will give it to Moiz to bring to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 2, 2014, on the motion for time allocation of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / *Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Naqvi has earlier today moved government notice of motion number 12.

Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's my pleasure to rise today to add my voice to this debate. First and foremost, we've all mentioned this, and I want to add my voice to this concern as well: The government seems to be time-allocating every single bill in this House. Whether there is opposition to the bill, whether there is agreement to the bill, it doesn't matter; they're just time-allocating everything.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Terrible.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of my colleagues shouts out that it's terrible. I agree. It is absolutely terrible. It flies in the face of democracy. To time-allocate everything indiscriminately doesn't really make sense. I mean, if there's a reason, if there's a strategy behind it, you could make your case, but to just blanket time-allocate every single bill isn't really encouraging democracy and isn't really productive.

But in this case, there's a specific concern. This bill is deeply flawed, and I want to raise a concern that the House leader brings up. The House leader brought up and named a number of organizations and said that the government had consulted with a number of groups. I hope the deputy House leader is paying attention to this. The House leader said that he had reached out to the Ontario Bar Association, an association that he is a member of, being a lawyer, and reached out to and consulted with the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, which is a wonderful organization, and said, "We've done these consultations." Well, you certainly did consult with them,

but you're not paying any heed to what they said. Both of those organizations clearly indicate that there are some serious problems with this bill. So when the government talks about protecting civil liberties, they're not. You're not protecting civil liberties, because two organizations well respected for understanding civil liberties clearly indicate that your bill runs roughshod over the civil liberties of those people who wish to enter a courthouse.

In fact, your bill is so draconian in nature that the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the CCLA, did a comparison of other jurisdictions. They looked at what else is out there in terms of other laws that govern courthouse security. They compared nine provinces and one territory, so they did a comparative analysis. They looked at these other jurisdictions, and I'll have you know that you should be very proud as a government: Your legislation is the only one, the only piece of legislation out of nine provinces and one territory, that gives security officials general power to demand information, the only one out of nine other provinces and one territory. None of them have this power to demand information from someone who wishes to enter into a courthouse. There is no requirement for it. Nine other provinces know that you don't need to demand information from someone who wants to come into a courthouse.

In fact, of nine other provinces and one territory, none of those has any authorization to have warrantless searches of vehicles. There's really no need for that. That's a clear violation of a charter-protected right. It's a charter-protected right that you should not be subject to arbitrary search and seizure. However, this government, which touts itself as and claims to be a transparent and accountable government, is bringing forward legislation which clearly violates the charter. On your charter-protected right to protect you from arbitrary search and seizure—this government has said those charter rights don't matter, those freedoms don't matter. "We will impose"—the only one of its type out of nine other provinces and one territory. This government is imposing warrantless searches on vehicles. For what reason? These other jurisdictions didn't need to do that. These other jurisdictions have safe courthouses. Why? What's the evidentiary basis for this? There is none. This government is clearly showing that it doesn't respect civil liberties.

1540

It raises the question of why this bill is being brought forward in the first place. Well, surprise: It's being brought because there were civil liberty violations with the pre-existing law.

So let me get this straight. There was an existing problem, the PWPA, which was responsible, because this government implemented and used this PWPA to create broad and vague power—it has broad and vague powers within the PWPA—and made amendments and regulation changes that allow the police to violate civil liberties. There were a number of reports that said this is a problem. You have a problem with a piece of legislation based on violations of civil liberties. What do you

do? You get rid of that piece of law, which is a good step, to replace it with another piece of legislation that also has civil liberty violations. Why are you doing that? How does that make any sense?

It's great to be able to stand up and say you're the only province that has something worthwhile—"We're the only province that has an Integrity Commissioner" or "We're the only province that has accountability in our health care system." That would be a good thing to get up and say—but in this case, you're the only province that violates civil liberties when people enter a courthouse. That's not something you should be proud of. You're the only jurisdiction that does that, out of those nine. You're the only jurisdiction that violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly section 8. Again, this is not something that you should be proud of. This is one of those cases where you don't want to be the only one that does that.

One other very telling comparison that the CCLA did is—the purpose for the search, if you're entering a courthouse, should be very clear. The purpose is that we want to make sure that our courthouses are safe. How do you make sure they're safe? Well, you make sure that certain materials which are dangerous—weapons, chemicals, explosives—aren't brought into the courthouse. If you tailor the legislation and you make sure that it's narrow, specific; not broad or vague or general—if it's a narrow, defined reason that you're invading someone's privacy, and it's specifically for the purpose of screening for these dangerous materials, that would make sense. In fact, in every jurisdiction that the CCLA compared, except for Saskatchewan, searches upon entry are explicitly and exclusively for the purpose of checking for weapons or other specifically prohibited items. That's clear legislation. That's defined legislation. That's not overly broad. That's not general. That's not vague. That's the type of legislation that we need here.

We will be bringing forward some amendments to this bill. We understand that you have a majority, so the end result is not really a guess. We know which way it's going to go. But we will make sure that, as New Democrats, we continue to raise the concerns of civil liberties, which this government clearly doesn't care about, and we will make sure that there are amendments raised that address this issue, because we believe—and I'm sure you don't believe, because this law clearly shows it—in an open courthouse. We believe in transparency in our justice system. These are hallmarks of democracy.

I personally have experienced this, in the sense that I learned from going to a courthouse. I saw things when I was still a student in law school.

It's important that we encourage people to come into our courthouses. It's important for people to feel that our courthouses are accessible. So you shouldn't put up barriers that impede someone's ability to go to a court. That's what your legislation is doing.

Another area that was touched on by this legislation, which was initially very problematic—and I have to give you some credit for this. You've definitely improved on

the initial two iterations of this bill, so this was definitely a win for the attorneys in this province. There was a request to protect the privileged documents that lawyers bring into courthouses, so that their sensitive materials that are important for the defence of their client or for the proper representation of their client—that that documentation, those files, that privileged information remains privileged and is not something that is subject to a search.

The lawyers in this province were able to apply pressure; the Ontario Bar Association was able to suggest amendments that were adopted—as well as other community advocates in this area, particularly the organization representing the lawyers across the communities, the county and district lawyers' association. They have advocated effectively to allow for privileged documents to be protected. That's definitely a win not only for lawyers but also for their clients, for the people of Ontario: to ensure that their documents, their personal files that lawyers are representing them on, are kept privileged. That was definitely a good piece, a good amendment, that we brought forward and that the government finally also acknowledged.

One other area, though, that's left to regulation and I think needs to be strengthened is, if a courthouse is to function effectively and efficiently—anyone who has been to a courthouse knows that there are significant backlogs, there are significant delays, and this is a problem. We also have a charter right to have a speedy trial; a trial within a reasonable amount of time. For the proper functioning of justice, you need to be able to get your matter brought to court in a reasonable amount of time. That's in the interests of justice.

To make sure that our cases are heard effectively, heard efficiently, heard in a speedy manner, it requires that the individuals who are actually running the courts, the people who work in the courthouse—the reporters, the clerks, and the lawyers—and the judges, for that matter, are able to access courts in a quick and efficient manner.

Judges often have separate entrances, so they're generally not concerned about this issue of access to the courthouses. But lawyers sometimes are subject to the whims of particular courthouses. What happens is, it creates delays. If a lawyer can't get into the courthouse, can't get in front of the judge to have the matter heard, it will delay cases.

On behalf of the Ontario bar, on behalf of the lawyers of Ontario, this piece of legislation needs to include clear legislation that ensures that lawyers can get in and out of courthouses in a quick manner, that they are not subject to any delays, so that the process of justice can unfold in a way that's quick, that's not delayed. There are already enough delays in the court system. To create a further delay by impeding lawyers from accessing the court would certainly be a problem. So this piece of legislation doesn't have enough to clarify that right of access for lawyers, so that they are able to access in a quick manner.

One other major victory in this legislation that I have to raise is that, initially, when the government brought

forward this bill, this bill had nothing in it that clarified an obligation on behalf of the courthouses of Ontario to accommodate individuals based on their creed or disability. That was a serious flaw. Again, we clearly believe that courts should be accessible. We clearly believe that a courtroom should be somewhere where everyone who wants to, who needs to, should be able to access it.

Whether that individual is a witness in a case who is performing their civic duty or their civic responsibility and has been subpoenaed to appear in court; whether it's someone who wants to be an observer, who wants to just go into court and watch what happens; whether someone is individually an accused person or subject to a trial matter or a lawsuit, all of these classes of people need to be able to access the court, regardless of their disability or their creed. In fact, put in a positive way, they need to be accommodated for whatever their creed is or whatever disability they're facing.

We're very proud, as New Democrats, that we put forward this amendment—this was a New Democrat amendment that we put forward—and we requested that the government accommodate this. We put this forward in committee. It was supported in committee and passed and made its way into the legislation. Now, in this bill, we proudly have, in accommodation, a requirement that courts accommodate people based on their creed or their disability.

This means that people, whatever their faith may be, if they wish to express it by wearing a hijab, by wearing a yarmulke, by wearing a turban or a *dastar*, by wearing a *kirpan*—these articles of faith should be respected and they should be accommodated in a courthouse.

That's a definite victory and something we're very proud of. I personally am very proud of being in that committee and being able to raise that issue and raise that amendment so that we could see that now in this piece of legislation. And for those folks who face disabilities, it's important that they also are accommodated, so that the courthouse, again, is accessible to all people. That's something we're very proud of and that's an amendment that's here in the bill.

1550

I just want to go back to the issues around the PWPA. What did the PWPA do? Schedule 1 of this bill seeks to repeal the PWPA. What that bill was, was essentially a law that applied generally to all public works in this province. Effectively what it does is, it's a blanket piece of legislation that allowed for certain powers—for the state, for the province, for police—to ensure that certain areas were safe.

The problem with that piece of legislation is that it was written a long time ago. It had broad powers that were no longer relevant to this time, and Justice McMurtry said we needed to have a more modern piece of legislation.

The problem with this law is that it allowed the minister and the cabinet to make changes to the powers that the police had in cabinet, through regulation. The problem with that is that there's no accountability. If you can

make changes in regulation, those changes aren't brought before the House. They're not debated in the House. There is not the same level of scrutiny. People can't stand up and say, "Listen, I think there's going to be a major problem if you give police the power to arrest somebody for no reason, if you give people, if you give police the ability to go into someone's backpack or into their bags and start searching around without any grounds"; that if you give these powers to the police, it's going to result in some serious problems.

The opposition could have stood up and said, "Hey, there's a problem with that." But because these changes were made through regulation in cabinet, there was no scrutiny. There was no ability to shed light on the problems that could have arisen from this and that in fact did arise. That's a serious problem.

And it's a trend. If you notice the legislation that comes before the House, more and more the majority of the powers conferred by many of the pieces of legislation we see—much of the power is kept in the regulation-making. What that means is, in terms of public scrutiny, in terms of what we can vote on, what we debate on—we debate on a bill, and some parts of the bill, in terms of the substance of the bill, are out there in the legislation, but a lot of the bill is left in the regulation-making. What that means is that we don't really know what the government will do with it. There is a lot of discretion, and that's a problem in the sense that the public, and particularly the opposition, doesn't have the same amount of say in terms of what's going on. In terms of the scrutiny, in terms of the accountability, there is a great deal less when decisions are made through regulation and not made in the House here.

This bill is interesting in the fact that we all agree that we should repeal the Public Works Protection Act. It certainly needs to be repealed. What happened in the G20 was one of the worst civil liberties violations in the history of Ontario, and arguably in the history of Canada, so we certainly need to see some remedy on it.

But if you look very carefully at Justice McMurtry's recommendations, Justice McMurtry clearly states that the problems with this bill were vagueness and overly broad legislation. Back in 2012, when the Ontario Bar Association made their recommendations with respect to this bill, they talked about that problem. They looked at the problems of this bill and they said, "Listen, the problem with this bill is that it talks about overly broad powers and vague powers." Now you're doing the same thing with this bill. And on top of doing it with this bill, you're time-allocating this bill, so you're compounding the mistakes that you're making. You're bringing in a piece of legislation that's going to deny civil liberties, that's going to create the same mistakes that the Public Works Protection Act did, and on top of that you're time-allocating this.

What does time allocation seek to do? It just seeks to silence debate, it seeks to silence dissent; and it's utterly not necessary. My colleague the member from Timmins—James Bay brought up a great point: that if you actually

look at it and look at bills, you could negotiate a settlement or negotiate with the other House leaders and look at the timeline it would take to get a bill from start to finish that way, and compare that with how long it takes to time-allocate everything. And if you measured how long it was taking, I think the member from Timmins—James Bay makes a great point when he says that at the end of the day, you might find that time-allocating everything is actually going to take longer, that you could actually streamline some of these bills and they could actually get through quicker if you actually negotiated and worked out a deal that was respectful to all the other members of the House.

At the end of the day, you have a bill before the House that, again, you're time-allocating. You're time-allocating everything indiscriminately. There's no rhyme or reason; there's no strategy behind it. Bills that we agree on, bills that we disagree on—all of them—are being time-allocated. It seems nonsensical. It seems illogical. I invite you to explain to me what your idea and your thought process is behind that. I also invite you to explain to me why you're stripping people of their civil liberties in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate. Something we don't get to do often enough these days in the Legislature is actually debate the bills the government is bringing forward, which the people of Prince Edward—Hastings or the people of Elgin—Middlesex—London or the people of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry sent us here to do to, to be their voice in this Ontario Legislature, to bring their concerns with government bills to light and actually hash them out.

I thought the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton said a couple of interesting things. He said there have been some changes to this bill, much to do with the fact that we actually maybe got the bill to committee. We had opportunities in this Legislature to talk about various bills, including the one we're facing right now, here today, and that's where positive changes can occur. The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton challenged the government to maybe tell us what their motivation is, but I think it's quite clear what their motivation is. They don't want us standing up here and dissing the legislation they are bringing forward, pointing out the flaws in the legislation.

I think it would serve the members of the government extremely well to hear those faults and those oversights here in this Legislature, because it will help them in passing bills that are going to have a harmful effect on the people of Ontario. We've seen examples of that over the years, none larger than the Green Energy Act.

You'll recall, Mr. Speaker, that when that was passed it was in a Liberal majority government, much like we have in this Legislature right now. They haven't learned a darned thing, apparently, because they hammered that through the Legislature as quickly as they possibly could, in spite of the fact that the official opposition and, I'm sure, even members of the third party had some concerns

about the Green Energy Act going forward. I wasn't here during that time, Mr. Speaker, as you were not either. But I know there were some concerns, on behalf of this side of the Legislature at that time, about the effect the Green Energy Act would have on manufacturers in the province of Ontario and driving up energy costs in Ontario for our residential homeowners.

I can tell you right now that the net effect from the Green Energy Act has been people being cut off of their electricity in Prince Edward-Hastings riding. They have been cut off of their electricity because they can't afford the bills, because they have gone up 56%. As I read in a petition earlier, the Auditor General reported that a large part of the increase in electricity was because of the global adjustment. That is something that could have been corrected had they had proper debate in the Legislature.

We're seeing it on the daycare bill, which was time allocated by this government. It passed third reading earlier today, as a matter of fact, because the government time-allocated this bill. They refused not just to hear from the official opposition or the third party; the government refused to hear from independent child care providers in Ontario. They refused to hear from those people and listen to their concerns when they are telling the government, through petitions and through our critic from Simcoe North—who has done a fantastic job at least getting their voice on the floor of the Legislature, outlining the concern that that bill is going to reduce daycare spaces by well over 100,000 in Ontario. Why they wouldn't listen to that before the roof caves in and people can't afford to put their children in daycare, Mr. Speaker—it's beyond me why they won't listen. As the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton just indicated in his speech, there are times when we can offer very constructive criticism and make a bill better, and very clearly, it could happen in this case.

1600

Instead, they're doing exactly what they did when the G20 hit Toronto. They went into their little bunker—I don't know where they were; if they were in Premier McGuinty's office or they were back here somewhere in their cabinet room—and they designed a secret bill that gave our security officials, our police officers, wartime powers, Mr. Speaker. They did that then. They're doing the same thing with every bill that comes before this Legislature. Day in, day out, they're time-allocating bills. They're muzzling the official opposition. They're muzzling the third party. Why are they doing it? They're trying to silence their critics, Mr. Speaker. And there are many critics out there, because they are passing an awful lot of flawed legislation.

In four years' time, the public will have their say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Prince Edward-Hastings. Saved by the bell.

Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 12. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We have a note. Sorry.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on government notice of motion number 12 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, December 3, 2014."

That's signed by the chief government whip, Mr. Delaney.

Vote deferred.

ENDING COAL FOR CLEANER AIR ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'ABANDON DU CHARBON POUR UN AIR PLUS PROPRE

Mr. Murray moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / *Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.*

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the great member from Mississauga-Brampton South.

Mr. Speaker, this is very timely. Just in the last 24 hours, the council of parties to the UN agreement on climate change has now started meeting in Lima, Peru, leading up to the next important meeting in Paris next year of the council of parties, which may be the last chance before it's too late to actually get an agreement on climate change.

This measure that the government undertook, and has now completed in 2014, to close coal plants was the single largest reduction of GHG emissions in the history of North America and quite probably the largest single GHG emissions reduction in the world. I looked today to try to find some other reduction; I can't. We're the only jurisdiction that has completely closed coal. In 2003, 25% of our generation was coal; today it is absolutely zero in the public utility. The only coal- or coke-generated is for steel, for purposes for which there is no substitute, but that is a relatively minor part of our emissions. Particularly as we move toward our target of 80% reduction by 2050, we realize that there are certain parts of the economy that cannot completely eliminate coal, so we have to make sure of those parts that can.

We will be going to Lima with our fellow provinces—with Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba and others—with a very

united front as Canadian provinces, both the energy ministers and the environment ministers. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, you know that would be ministers from all of Canada's political parties at the sub-national level with a very common purpose: to see deep reductions in GHG emissions.

It was interesting when we were in Charlottetown and I had the great privilege to represent the government of Ontario and this Legislature in discussions with other ministers. The federal government had blocked and prevented a discussion on climate change for five years in a row; the federal government exercised its authority to not allow ministers of the environment to even discuss climate change. Pretty bizarre.

It's also interesting—I have to say it as an aside—that I've been hearing from members of the official opposition that they wanted to debate this and that it's very serious, and they're not paying any attention. It's kind of interesting that this debate is so important to them. I want to commend the members of the third party, who are actually paying attention.

This is particularly important, because I don't think there's an issue more important to us, to my four-year-old grandson, than getting this right. I was reading an editorial in the Toronto Sun, and the person writing for one of the more Conservative organizations said that I was exaggerating, that we're not on track for four degrees Celsius. Well, the last five years in the world, quite frankly, had the largest emissions of GHGs in our history. We are emitting more greenhouse gases every year, not less, and breaking records. And 2014, as of this date, if the year ended now, will go down in history as the warmest year ever recorded. We have just lived through the warmest year ever recorded, and the last 20 years have been the two warmest decades since anyone has been recording this in millennia.

This is a very serious problem. I talked about California. Our food prices are going up 20%. There is no tax increase I can think of in the modern history of the country that is going to hit people more than the fact that California's three years of drought are going to bump our food prices by 20%. Nothing hurts middle-income families more than that. And next year, after this continuing pattern of drought, it will go up again.

From a conservative political philosophical perspective, you want to maintain an effective market, and you don't want to have unnecessary scarcity of essential goods. Food is pretty essential, and it's becoming scarce because of inaction on climate change. Even that blessed Tim Hortons Canadian coffee went up 10 cents on Friday, and will be going up a lot more, because the impact of burning coal around the world is causing massive droughts in Brazil, and the biggest reason is that that's where Tim Hortons gets most of its coffee from.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And they've never had a drought before? There's no proof of that whatsoever.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Okay. I want to put on the record that the member said I'm making this up and there's no proof of climate change. I'll take that as the

position of the official opposition, which is extraordinary, after all of that.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd ask the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London to withdraw.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I withdraw—still, not making the truth up.

Interjections.

1610

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm sure he meant that with a great deal of kindness in his heart. I'm not taking offence by it, Mr. Speaker.

But we do not burn coal anymore. We, Quebec and British Columbia—and California, I think—are about the only jurisdictions in North America that are below 1990 GHG emissions. Almost everyone else is out there.

The government of Canada will not meet national standards as we go forward. It will not meet its greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Even with Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia's massive reductions, increases in the other provinces will continue to make Canada one of the highest emitters and will see Canada's greenhouse gas emissions go up faster than most nations.

It's really interesting, because my federal counterpart—that is the government of Canada saying as they go into the next round of international meetings, where we've been a standing joke as a country because of our emissions? My federal counterpart, the Minister of the Environment, says things like, "Canada has one of the cleanest electricity systems in the world, with 79% of our electricity supply emitting no greenhouse gas.... We have taken action on two of the largest sources of emissions in Canada, the transportation sector and the electricity generation sector. Canada was also the first major coal user to ban the construction of traditional coal-fired generation units" and close its coal plants.

No, it wasn't Canada, Mr. Speaker; it was Ontario.

Interjection: It was Ontario.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It was Ontario, because New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Alberta still rely on, on average, 70% of their generation from coal. It is only Ontario.

This year was an interesting year because, for the first time, green energy in Canada and the clean-tech/green-energy sector exceeded the oil sands for employment. Some 23,700 people now work in green energy, and 22,340 in the oil sands.

The oil sands are the most subsidized industry in Canada. There is no place where more tax dollars go to subsidizing industry than the oil sands. Ontario had zero federal support—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke that, if he chooses to engage in this debate, he would at least do it from his seat. Thank you.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've always learned that politics is about addition and not

subtraction, so I'd welcome any member who wants to find a seat over here in the centre of the political spectrum.

Why is this so important, and what was the hope of the Ontario government in closing coal plants? To create momentum globally, so that other jurisdictions that burn coal could see a pathway forward.

We did that without a cap-and-trade system. We did that without a price on carbon. Any other jurisdiction that has done it—Alberta has a price on carbon; the Alberta Conservatives brought it in. BC has a price on carbon. Quebec has a price on carbon. Mexico has a price on carbon. California has a price on carbon. If you closed coal plants in any of those other jurisdictions, you would have gotten money back through those cap-and-trade systems to recapitalize it.

When I was with Resolute Forest Products—it's interesting, because when they actually make investments in Quebec now to reduce their GHG and modernize their plants, they take those reductions, put it on auction and get money back. They said to me, "You know, we realize that right now the opposition parties are making that a difficult conversation, but it's a market mechanism, and maybe someone should come up to Thunder Bay or go to Dryden and come and sit in our boardroom like you have, because we haven't seen opposition members up here having a conversation with us about that."

We've had a cap-and-trade system now in Quebec, and they think it's a terrible thing, but none of them operate a cement plant or a pulp and paper mill. They'd better get smart about this, because, you know, the member from the Pembroke area—I don't have his riding right in front of me; I apologize—is telling me that I don't know anything. Well, I would suggest that that member go talk to some of the heavy emitters that are operating in other jurisdictions that have those. The steel industry is asking us to actually start putting a price on imported rebar, because they've cleaned up their act, and then we get stuff from Turkey that has high emissions, because it doesn't matter where in the world greenhouse gases come from, whether it's Turkey, Canada, Chile or China—they do the same damage. So what our strategy with Quebec and British Columbia and Alberta, with Premier Prentice—who I give a big shout-out to; he's going to be arriving in the next few days. He has taken on this idea. He has said that the future of Alberta has to move beyond oil because we're getting into the age of unburnable carbon. We can now only burn 20 years' worth of oil in this century before we exceed the unburnable carbon. That means that two-thirds of all the coal and fossil fuels out there cannot be burned, because they cannot be burned without the massive destruction of our ecosystem. Jurisdictions right now like the Conservative government in the United Kingdom—I would say to my friends in the official opposition, look at what your cousins in the UK have done. They have a five-year carbon budget, Mr. Speaker. In the UK, you are only allowed to burn carbon within a very restricted budget, and every five years they shrink that budget. They have

actually exceeded their greenhouse gas emissions and they're a pretty conservative party, Mr. Cameron's.

When we get into a trade agreement, I'd ask my friends opposite, especially my friend the honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, how are you going to have a free trade agreement with the UK and Germany? Do you think they're going to allow us not to have a carbon budget? We're just going to burn all the carbon we want and we're going to be able to trade into California and New York and the UK when they all have cap-and-trade systems and they have carbon budgets? Nonsense. They're going to put a price on Canadian products, and you can have other people write it or we can actually have an intelligent conversation in this House, because we actually have some moral authority in Ontario, as do Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia, because we've done the heavy lifting. Alberta, while it is the largest source of emitters, now has a government with a new Premier that's taking this issue seriously. China has gone to a cap-and-trade system, Mr. Speaker.

But on seven different occasions in the federal House of Commons, the federal Minister of the Environment has—the exact same sentence I just read. She stands up in the House and she says, "Well, what has Canada done? Why should Canada be taken seriously?" Because we're not being so right now in the courts of public opinion around the world and at the negotiating table. Why? "Because we closed coal plants and we reduced transportation sector emissions."

It wasn't so, Mr. Speaker. It was California that set the auto emissions and gas standards, and Canada adopted them because you can't sell cars into the United States without meeting those standards. It was California that took the political heat. It was Governor Brown and Governor Schwarzenegger who ran on that and forced it on other jurisdictions, including us. That's what they're taking credit for, and they are taking credit for our coal plan, because they've got nothing.

Mr. Speaker, they then said that they were going to pass legislation that was going to force all of the other provinces to reduce their coal emissions. They ran on it, and then in 2012, the previous minister, Minister Nicholson, stood up in the House and withdrew that. So here is the government of Canada taking credit for coal when the only thing they've done is that they actually broke their promise and did not adapt any clean coal standards in Canada. We do not have federal clean coal standards, so it's pretty nifty and pretty ballsy to actually take credit.

You know what Ms. Aglukkaq, my federal counterpart, said? She said, "Well, you know, emissions are down and they wouldn't have gone down if we had a Liberal federal government." It was actually a Liberal government under Gordon Campbell in British Columbia, a Liberal government under Jean Charest in Quebec and a Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty in Ontario that reduced the GHGs that they're taking credit for. The only thing the Conservatives have done is

exactly what they're doing in the House, catcalling and saying that they don't believe in climate change, that they don't think it's a problem, and they think the world will come to an end if we take any of the reasonable actions that others did—and their federal counterparts.

So you know what's happening right now, Mr. Speaker? I now serve on an international body established by the Climate Group and by the UN. All of us at the subnational level are actually outmanoeuvring, if I have to say that, the US Congress, which has gone crazy on this, and the federal government here and the federal government in Australia, which have withdrawn from this. Subnational governments across North America and through the Americas are teaming up with the Netherlands, with Brazil, with China to actually get these agreements in place. When I'm in Lima next week, I'm doing what the federal government should be doing. While they are out there trying to convince other countries not to sign on to deep decarbonisation, almost every single subnational in Canada save Saskatchewan is out working on Deep Decarbonization Pathways.

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Here we have the federation—and when we existed it was the provinces that went to Charlottetown to create the federal government; the federal government did not create the provinces. So how does the federal government go internationally when nine out of 10 provinces and three out of three territories all want deep GHG reductions and want to seize the opportunity of the \$6-trillion expansion of the economy to a low-carbon economy?

The other thing that's coming out in Lima, if you've been following it, is that the economics are saying that when we went to the tech boom with ICT, the thing that made Jim Bradley, one of the smartest guys in the world because he just embraced the BlackBerry and the iPad, and no one does it like Jim, transformational, my predecessor in this thing—thank God for people like Jim Bradley, who helped us drive that IT revolution. That was a \$1-trillion expansion of our economy.

This low-carbon economy: When General Motors makes better cars that are made in China, when we have these things that last forever and use almost no energy in our solar panels, when our houses have thermal and have low heating costs, when we do these kinds of things, when we do things like what Guelph has done in reducing the amount of energy to move water within the municipality, when we've created the next generation of products and exported them to the world, we are going to lead. Quebec is going to lead, British Columbia is going to lead, Alberta is going to lead. My friends in Manitoba, governed by the third party in this House, are going to lead. Nova Scotia is going to lead. Why? Because we disagree with the federal government. We're not afraid of this issue and we recognize this that is the biggest economic opportunity that we've ever seen in the world. The federal government not only is neutral, it's actively campaigning to avoid getting the tough decisions made now to give our kids a future.

The honourable member said—and I'm going to conclude with this—that I don't know what I'm talking

about. I took my bicycle two years ago, in year 2 of the drought in California—and my friend the Minister of Agriculture and Food, from the great community of Peterborough, has talked about this. The farmers down there said something to us: "You need pollinators and you need water. Right now, we don't have a lot of pollinators and we have almost no water," because they were draining their aquifers. If you think that we can live in this—because every time you talk about trade with China, they get up and object that the Premier's in China, like there are no jobs there. She brought back over \$1 billion in investment and over 1,000 jobs—because we're not afraid of the world and the party opposite is.

But it is the downside of this: If we don't solve this problem—where do you think food comes from? One third of all the food in North America comes from California, billions of dollars of trade, and we actually are now becoming, I think, the third—and the Minister of Agriculture will correct me if I'm wrong. We are now going to emerge out of his leadership and out of the Premier's leadership to become the new centre of food security. Why? Because we have the Great Lakes, we have a water supply, and we probably have a little bit more stable climate, as much as our temperature will change by about five degrees in this century. We have to look for these new opportunities. Whether it's in corn or whether it's in market garden vegetables, we need to do that. Because the one thing we know is that the economy is going to change and agriculture is going to change, and while land doesn't move, what you can grow on that land is going to change.

When the federal government continues, in seven different statements in the House of Commons—the only thing the federal Minister of the Environment could point to that Canada has accomplished was closure of the coal plants in Ontario. That's it. That's all.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to leave you with is this little thought: If you don't want any part of the solution and you're going to continue to be part of the problem, get out of the way. Because right now, the federal government is undermining the reputation that Canadians have for good environmental stewardship.

I will conclude so that my parliamentary assistant can step up and make me look not quite as smart, because she's a lot quicker about this than I am.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Now I recognize the member from Mississauga–Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: To begin with, I would like to thank my minister for his comments. Actually, he's smarter than me; that's what I would say. He delivered a very eloquent speech about environmental issues and climate change.

Mr. Speaker, coming back, I really appreciate you giving me the opportunity to speak on the merits of Bill 9.

Strong environmental policy is necessary for us to continue to be patrons of this planet. We are blessed to live in the beautiful province of Ontario, and the best

country in the world. We must ensure that our future generations inherit a clean and green Ontario.

I read an article in a 2009 issue of the *Lancet*, a respectable medical journal. The gist of the article was that climate change is the biggest global health threat, even bigger than cancer and heart disease. By eliminating coal power, the Liberal government is creating history by reducing sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions that pollute our air and cause diseases. Cleaner air means healthier citizens. By taking positive steps in this direction, we have already realized an estimated \$4.4 billion in associated health, environmental and financial benefits from eliminating coal power in Ontario. To the average citizen, this means that we have had fewer smog days since closing coal plants. This means more sunny days that we can enjoy with our families.

As this House already knows, this government's strategy of eliminating coal power is equivalent to taking seven million cars off the road—considering the fact that there are approximately 10.4 million registered vehicles in Ontario, we can take pride in this accomplishment.

In eliminating coal power as an energy source, Ontario has become a leader in combatting climate change in North America, and we have no plans to stop. We are not alone. Even international agencies such as the WHO, the IMF and the UN are also asking all governments to take action in this regard. By putting this law into effect, Ontario will be sending a strong signal both nationally and internationally that we are serious about the fight against climate change. It will be the first of a series of steps that will lead to a full strategy to combat climate change.

The great thing is that with coal power gone, we have the ability to pursue better alternative energy options: cleaner, renewable and future-oriented. Already 80% of our energy options come from clean sources such as water, nuclear and renewables.

As we shift away from fossil fuels—dirty, non-renewable sources—Ontario has the prospect of becoming a leader in clean technology. Even the United States and China are becoming more serious about environmental issues and how the environmental changes are adversely affecting our planet. However, it is sad to see that our federal government is still in denial. They are not stepping up to the plate. US Secretary of State John Kerry has stated that the clean technology revolution will be a \$6-trillion industry. Ontario can and should be a leader, not just because it is morally right; it's a step in the right direction and it's sound economic policy.

The importance of this bill is to ensure that the health and environmental benefits that come from eliminating coal power are protected by this legislation. This is an important piece of legislation. This bill must be passed for the sake of our children's health, for our economy and our environment.

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I hope all members of this House will help to get this bill passed swiftly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I think climate change, the extinction of species, the devastation of our environment—these are some of the most pressing issues that our society will face, ever. These are some of the most serious issues that we're facing right now, and we need to have the courage to be able to address it. So I really appreciate the comments made by both the Minister of the Environment and the parliamentary assistant, particularly talking about humans as stewards of this Earth.

This is our home, and I was just thinking about it: We have an obligation and a duty to make sure we keep our own personal homes in good order and we take care of them. We kind of nurture our home in a way, right? We want to make sure it's a place where our families feel safe and secure, that our children feel it is a place that they can enjoy and where they're safe. Similarly, we should have that same responsibility and that same obligation with the planet that we live on. Our community is broader than just our neighbourhoods and our homes; it's the place we call our home in a broader sense, and we have a fundamental responsibility to make sure that we leave it better than we found it.

We've failed in this obligation. If you look at the impact we've made on this planet, we've failed so far. But that doesn't mean that that's our future. It doesn't mean that we don't have any hope and it doesn't mean that it has to always be that way. We can make changes. We can actually change the direction that we've gone in. There are very optimistic signs. We can move away from the dead end-type of technology that requires fossil fuel burning. There are alternatives out there, and we can pursue those if we have the conviction to do so. I think more than anything we need to really look at, on a broader scale beyond just coal, what we can do as a society to move towards a more sustainable future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased to participate—at least with the two minutes allocated to us in this particular debate.

This is an important piece of legislation in that I think there's a recognition that the burning of coal has produced tremendous environmental and health problems in all the jurisdictions in which it's been undertaken. We want to ensure that by regulation some government can't further make a change, so we want to place it in legislation, so that you could not have, for the purpose of producing electricity, a circumstance where you would have coal being burned in the province of Ontario.

I was glad to hear my colleague from the NDP speaking about this because I was looking for it in the NDP platform. I look at the platforms, and I looked in the NDP platform and saw no reference to it. I remember in the old days, when I would talk to people like Ruth Grier and Bud Wildman, environment was way up here in terms of the concern. So I'm encouraged by the fact that the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton was able to raise that specific issue. I know he will say to his colleagues in the NDP, "We need more environmental emanations

coming from the New Democratic Party,” the way it used to be in the good old days.

Our federal government brags about this. John Baird, who once sat in this particular Legislature, goes around saying, “Look at what Canada has done in terms of our contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.” He does fail to say that it was the policy of the government of the province of Ontario that ensured this is happening. I’m sure he just didn’t have time in his speech to make that reference because, knowing John as I do, he would normally have given full credit to the province of Ontario for this initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased to rise and make a few comments about An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities.

As I was listening—I listened intently to the minister making his presentation—I thought that usually when we have legislation in this place, it’s to do something going forward. I listened to this presentation, and this was all about, “We have completed the task,” that we don’t have any coal generation in the province of Ontario today. I will be researching the bill more to find out why we would need a piece of legislation to say that we did what we already had finished. That usually doesn’t need to be regulated.

I do want to say that, as I was listening—and I appreciate that that was done—the whole process of doing it when, in fact, we were talking about building wind generation to replace coal generation seems to be a little bit of a problem area, because the wind doesn’t blow whenever we need the energy that was generated by the coal. So what they have been doing is building gas plants to supplement it, when we need energy and the wind isn’t blowing. All the capacity we have to replace coal now has to be gas generation, because we can’t depend on wind generation.

Now, wind is generating when the wind is blowing and our air conditioners are not working and we don’t need that power. That’s where we get the challenge of what we do with the power we’re producing that we’re paying premium dollars for but can’t in fact use in our grid. I think that’s why we end up having to sell power at a very low price or, at times, we even have to pay them to take that power. I think the minister should have talked a little bit more about that and how we’re going to fix that problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I would like to add a couple of minutes on this. I’m especially thankful to the member from St. Catharines, who mentioned Bud Wildman. As we in this House all know, or should know, it was Bud Wildman, as Minister of the Environment back in the Bob Rae government—February 15, 1994—who introduced the Environmental Bill of Rights.

Not a lot has been done on the environmental file for the past 11 years or so. We’re running out of time. I

really appreciate the passion that the new Minister of the Environment and Climate Change brings to the table and brings to this debate, because previous members—I know the member from St. Catharines is a former Minister of the Environment and was pretty good at what he did in that portfolio as well, but the issue of climate change never really came to the fore as we’re dealing with it now.

We’re dealing with it now because we’re talking about the four coal-burning power generation plants that have been closed in the past number of years. The bill itself speaks to the cessation of coal-burning plants which, I guess, is a retroactive pat on the back for what we have done in the past as opposed to moving forward, because we don’t burn coal anymore. It’s not like saying, “Here is the deadline; we’re going to meet it,” because we know the deadline—well, there were four or five deadlines on the cessation of coal-burning plants, and they came and went and came and went and came and went.

But we’re there now, and that’s a good thing. It’s a good thing that we’re not burning coal in Ontario anymore. Don’t get me wrong; I support what the bill is intended to do, even though, in my opinion, it’s a retroactive pat on the back as opposed to legislation we could be moving forward instead of putting time allocation on any number of other bills.

Speaker, thank you for the time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for final comments.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks to my parliamentary assistant and to the members from St. Catharines, Oxford, Bramalea-Gore-Malton and Windsor-Tecumseh. I appreciate their interventions.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does more than simply mark a very historic moment in being the first jurisdiction—the member from St. Catharines and I have a little secret. I gave him the last piece of coal from Atikokan in appreciation for his leadership.

This is actually making it illegal to ever open a coal plant as a free-standing utility again in Ontario. So we’re actually making it illegal, and if you look through this, it makes it almost impossible to extend coal.

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That’s particularly important—and I do respect my friend from Windsor-Tecumseh—because there are jurisdictions that have gone back to coal, which is a problem. That’s impossible, and that’s it. We are doing a lot of other things. We’re electrifying the entire GO system. There are a number of climate change initiatives, and we will be launching a new strategy, starting consultations very early in the new year. But I think this is a foundation to sort of close the door on this.

I do want to say, particularly to my friends in the third party and to my friend from Oxford, in places like Denmark and the Netherlands you’re getting to a point now where more than 50% of the energy is renewables, and it’s, interestingly, from wind and solar. This mythology that wind and solar isn’t as stable—you’ve got

northern European countries right now that are actually getting past the 50% in these new, clean technologies and advancing batteries.

But, you know, Norway and New Zealand decided that this was an issue above politics, and their Parliaments decided that if they didn't get this right, nothing else they did mattered because there wouldn't be much of a planet left to do anything on. I'm hoping—I want to thank the members of the third party—that maybe we, at least two of three parties in here, can just lift this up beyond politics to do something that we'll be proud of one day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to stand here today because there's lots to talk about, and I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, as he has lots to say, and I know the party opposite always appreciates his eloquent comments.

With that, I have to revisit the fact that I really do appreciate the chance to join the debate because, as my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings said earlier, we don't get a lot of chances to debate in this House, unfortunately, because the government of the day is time-allocating many bills, essentially shutting us out of debate. They're not only shutting us out, but they're shutting out stakeholders and concerned citizens from sharing their voice and concerns about the type of legislation that is being rammed through this House prior to the Christmas break.

I think it's so important to take time to debate what really matters, and when I say that, when we debate and we talk about going forward as the province of Ontario, we need to make sure we separate emotion from science. Unfortunately, this government proves time and time again that they're more interested in political science as opposed to sound science, just as we saw last week with the introduction of a huge, huge restriction on neonics, but I'll touch on that in a moment or two.

It's an interesting time in Ontario. Phasing out coal-powered electricity has been a commitment made by all three parties, starting with the regulation—I'd be remiss if I didn't touch on it—issued by Elizabeth Witmer and the PC Party. Elizabeth Witmer is a great Huron-county-born and bred and proud rural resident who has demonstrated leadership on this particular issue for years and years, more than a decade ago, actually. She did so by closing down the first coal plant in Ontario, the Lakeview generating station. We certainly appreciate the vision and commitment that she had in that regard.

But, you know, it's interesting because we have to ask, really and truly, when you take a look at Bill 9, why do we even need this new legislation? It's really very thin, Speaker, as you can see, and anyone who goes to Hansard or goes online can find out for themselves.

It's interesting, again, because we just have to get the job done. Action speaks louder than words. Even our

own Minister of the Environment and Climate Change said himself that it's time to stop applauding coal plant closures and move on, yet today, through the introduction of this bill, we still see this Liberal government posturing and pontificating about issues that they tend to use to further complicate things. Let's talk about that in a moment.

The bottom line is, for Ontario to be prosperous once again, we need jobs. We need viable energy sectors; we need viable manufacturing sectors; we need viable agricultural and food sectors, to move forward.

But unfortunately, so much of what this government is doing is being based on political science versus sound science, and they're handcuffing our manufacturers and our job creators. What's happening as a result? They're moving south of the border, where coal is used. They're moving to other jurisdictions where energy sources are cheaper. That is a problem, and I invite the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to wake up to that and wake up his caucus to say, hey, Ontario can't afford any more ill-conceived plans, visions—legislation, if you will—that handcuff us in putting Ontarians to work.

Again, it's interesting, in terms of the pontification that we've been having, because the current minister acts like there's so much urgency when it comes to climate change, yet it's important to point out that this Liberal government has had over a decade to do something. But they've virtually sat on their hands with respect to climate change.

I say to the party across the floor, if you're serious about protecting the environment, then why did the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario warn that the Liberal government is dismantling environmental protections, which could have disastrous results for the province? You have to look at the big picture, Speaker, as opposed to just picking pet projects, if you will.

Again, I go back to the Environmental Commissioner's report that was released in October. He described Ontario's current pollution-fighting efforts as an embarrassment, elaborating that it was only a mere two decades ago that our province had a world-class pollution control system. The report goes on to say that the government has taken very little action to implement its own environmental plan. That is an embarrassment to this government, and they need to stand up and own it.

So much of the legislation that has come out of this government over the last decade actually is an embarrassment and a job dismantler that puts all of us in an embarrassing situation.

Going back to the government's track record, I have to share with you, Speaker, that the Ontario Liberals are not on track to meet their very own 2020 greenhouse gas emission targets, targets which they set for themselves.

The Environmental Commissioner has slammed this government time and again, yet the Liberals ignore all of his suggestions. Even the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario estimates that up to 250 deaths every year are directly related to burning coal.

We've been warned by health professionals. Now this government, as well as all of us, have been warned by the

Environmental Commissioner that this government needs to perk up, stand up and do the right thing, do the honourable thing, and start meeting their own greenhouse gas emission targets.

There's an issue with Bill 9, because it fails to address how they're going to reduce private sector coal use. It's one thing to lead by example, in terms of coal power generation, but we need to take a look at reducing the source of coal pollution, and that, Speaker, is where a real opportunity lies to clean up Ontario's air.

Again, I'll share this with you: The cement industry has been calling on the Liberal government for quite some time now to make regulatory changes that would allow them to use alternate fuels in cement kilns. Yet they have had no action from this government.

There are alternate fuels that include non-recyclable materials, like shingles and certain plastics, that could be used as a fuel source—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the members in the House, in fairness of debate, to please keep your discussions at a minimal level, so that I am able to hear the speaker and give her the respect that she deserves. Thank you for that.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate that very much, Speaker, because not only do we want to be heard in the House, but stakeholders across this province want to be heard as well. Stakeholders and those on the front line know the most about it, and they need to be included in the conversation and included in plans to go forward to address this.

But again, as I say, time and time again, over the last decade and, most recently, in the last few months, we've seen where this Liberal government literally shuts out stakeholders and industry organizations, just to go along their merry way. It's a travesty, what's happening in this province because of that.

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Going back to Bill 9: Bill 9 sets out no plans to convert existing coal plants into natural gas or biomass facilities. We need to catch up and realize the opportunities that lay ahead of us. Again, Bill 9 is very thin. It's nothing but an opportunity for our Liberal government to stand up and pontificate.

The reality is that the rest of Ontario is struggling to meet energy costs, and we need a government that is dedicated to research and true science in order to move this province forward and again make energy affordable. I'll talk about making energy affordable in a moment, because we have a very good suggestion in that regard, and it's called IWTs. I will come back to that.

The Liberals have no idea how to balance growing our economy and protecting our environment all at the same time. Any serious piece of legislation would have addressed how to preserve jobs by converting coal plants to natural gas and biomass power generation, just like the former Auditor General recommended.

This energy file has been severely mismanaged by the Liberals, and—here we go—we've seen clear evidence

of this through their failed Green Energy Act. The Green Energy Act, introduced in 2009, is absolutely horrendous, first of all stripping all autonomy from our municipalities and paying subsidies that no jurisdiction in this world could ever sustain, nor should they perpetuate.

But yet, we have a Liberal government that closes their eyes, shuts their ears and goes on their merry way, even though time and time again we stand in this House and express voices from our constituents saying how they're finding it so hard to make ends meet. Even the organizations and agencies that are in place to assist people to keep their lights and heat on are having trouble as well. All the while, this ministry just ignores it, carries on and has the audacity to actually think and propose a 2.0 version of the Green Energy Act.

We can't afford this. We're selling our energy at a loss. It's been estimated that taxpayers have paid \$2 billion doing this—\$2 billion wasted in paying other jurisdictions to take surplus energy we don't need off our hands. Honestly, this is where political science needs to be brought to an end. The economy and true science need to be founding pillars for all of us to build our future upon.

Ontarians, as I said, are paying some of the highest prices for hydro in North America, driving businesses across the border. The decision to move the gas plants cost taxpayers another \$1.1 billion. A billion here, a billion there—it seems like this Liberal government doesn't care how much their scandals are costing Ontarians. But we in opposition do, because we are close to our constituents and we hear what they're saying. We meet with our constituents, and we try to elevate their voices. But unfortunately, the party opposite continues to prove they have deaf ears to true concerns from Ontarians.

The decision to move the gas plants, for example, was supposed to facilitate the transition from coal to alternative energy sources, yet we know that this did not happen. Further, we see failures in the use of industrial wind turbines and how they've devastated rural Ontario. Speaker, I could go on and on about how the failed Green Energy Act has totally destroyed my riding in terms of relationships between families, neighbours, constituents and municipalities—and between neighbouring municipalities, as well. That's just a start. Then this government continues to perpetuate the farce when they go against their own Environmental Review Tribunal—when an ERT decision ruled against the Ministry of the Environment of the day with regard to planning hurdles.

It just goes to show that the only way this Liberal government today knows how to rule is with a huge stick. They don't care what's happening across the province. They don't care how their decisions are negatively impacting Ontarians. Really and truly, I hope that at some point—we've got members in the Liberal caucus who surely can't agree with all this legislation and all the heavy sticks that are being used right now. I hope with all my heart that around their caucus table, they have enough confidence from us opposite, as well as from their constituents, to stand up and say, "Enough is enough."

We can talk about how wind farms are popping up everywhere across the province, yet all the while, the people that own the wind projects are changing their plans. They don't have to go back to the Environmental Review Tribunal at this point, and that needs to be addressed as well. They don't care about setbacks. They don't care whether a municipality is a willing host or not, and it's just a shame.

It shows that this government lacks foresight: the investment in industrial wind turbines where storage technology has not yet made this type of energy profitable or sensible for Ontario's needs.

It makes me come back to the Fraser Institute, and specifically, a report that recently confirmed electricity rates are skyrocketing under this government's continued mismanagement of the electricity file. "Wind and solar power systems provide less than 4% of Ontario's power but account for 20% of the cost paid by Ontarians, yet the government wants to triple the number of wind and solar generators. That's a good deal," in terms of the subsidies being paid out for wind and solar producers, "but a raw deal for consumers." That was specifically said by Tom Adams. He is a co-author of the study I just quoted and also an independent energy analyst.

This particular report also recommended that a solution to any electricity shortfall is not more wind, but recommissioning the four units that have pollution abatement equipment at the Nanticoke and Lambton generating stations. That was a recommendation that had come forward.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: That was a recommendation that came forward—but you know what? When people are coming forward with so many various reports at different levels, it shows how Liberals have failed Ontarians on so many levels. They lack the leadership to address priorities, including the debt and deficit and, again, soaring electricity rates, a failed green energy plan, gridlock. This list is seemingly endless.

But you know what? The real band-aid that the Liberals continue to pull out of their tool box is tax. When there's a problem or they need more money, they just think nothing of taxing Ontarians once again. Time and again, during the last election and leading into this fall and another winter season—we hear time and again that there is nothing left in so many pockets, and it's a real concern. With that, we issue a concern that the Liberals' climate change initiatives have come out of left field, really and truly. They have come out of left field and have essentially proven that while this government has sat on their hands for years and years, now they're jumping on the bandwagon, again to pontificate a sudden concern when there's a possibility of finding them another revenue source, or rather, another way to empty Ontarian pockets. That's what this is really coming down to, Speaker. It's about finding another revenue source to offset their mismanagement and costly decisions that are driving jobs out of Ontario.

Recently, Quebec, who the government seems to be following the lead on on a variety of issues, has an-

nounced they will introduce a carbon tax, starting January 1. It's predicted to generate \$500 million. Again, we raise concern over the fact, does this government really, really care about climate change, as we all should, or are they seeing it just as another opportunity to take more dollars out of Ontarians' pockets to help their Liberal deficit and the debt that's amassed over the last decade?

It's interesting and very curious that in the recent Liberal economic statement, this government just revealed that they are short \$500 million in revenue. There are parallels here. Quebec has generated \$500 million in revenue through a carbon tax, and we have a shortfall. I think this government is going to try to do anything they possibly can to fix their fiscal mess, all on the shoulders of Ontarians.

1700

Recently, PC interim leader Jim Wilson questioned the Premier on a carbon tax, and she would not rule it out. We see this government getting money any way they can to make up for their mismanagement, and this concerns me. As I said before, Speaker, how much more can Ontario families take? In 2017, this government will introduce an Ontario pension plan, which we all know will kill jobs and take yet more money from Ontarians. Ontarians are overtaxed as it is. Our business environment is already unfriendly. The Premier claims she is concerned for the future of Ontario's children with regard to climate change, but she doesn't seem concerned at all by the debt she is leaving those very same children. This will be a burden for future generations.

Today our debt is \$289 billion. That is \$21,356 for every man, woman and child. We shouldn't have a revenue problem in this province with the amount of taxes and money that is taken in. Yet we do; we have a huge debt that this government chooses to carry because they can't find a fix to their spending problem. That's underscored by a total disrespect for the taxpayer.

The amount of scandals we've seen from this government underscores and emphasizes the disrespect. Gas plants, eHealth, Ornge, MaRS: It shows us time and time again the blatant disrespect for the taxpayer and the serious lack of concern for future generations who will hold this debt.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Move on; move on.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I love the fact that I'm being encouraged to move on, and I won't forget that comment was shared because I would like to move on and talk a little bit more about Elizabeth Witmer. As mentioned, this initiative began with the PC Party years ago. Witmer served for Kitchener–Waterloo for more than 20 years and, as I mentioned before, she's a good Huron county gal. She led the closure of Ontario's first coal plant, and it would be the only one closed until recently.

In 2001, Elizabeth Witmer, as the former Minister of the Environment, issued a regulation requiring the phase-out of coal burning at the Lakeview generating station, which reduced the province's total coal-fired electricity generation capacity by 15%. However, for the Liberals,

this has been an issue on the back burner for the last 11 years. Liberals, once again, cannot even meet their own goals.

In 2003, the Liberals ran on a campaign promise to end coal-fired electricity generation in the province by 2007. Well, 10 years after the announcement and six years past the deadline, they're just finishing up the job. So, yes, it's nice to cheer about the elimination of coal-powered plants, but we must also acknowledge how poorly this file has been managed and just how behind they truly are. Because of the Liberal mismanagement, Speaker, the hard-working people of this province continue to pick up the tab, paying considerable financial costs, and health costs as well.

I recognize the importance of clean air and the need and the importance of breathing easy. Last week, on COPD Day, we were reminded of the importance of lung health. Today, more than 780,000 Ontarians live with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, COPD. It is a life-altering disease, and more actions need to be taken in our province. As a proud supporter of lung health, I'm actively involved in advocacy and action on this issue and support those who are helping Ontarians breathe easy. I sit on the lung health caucus, which is dedicated to developing a lung health strategy and promoting it through all parties in the Legislature. Just last week, I joined the Ontario Lung Association and was pleased to have my own lungs tested through a simple test called spirometry—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Spirometry.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you. I got that out eventually.

I encourage all people to do that. It's a quick, easy test. It was non-invasive. It was quick, as I said. It's extremely important for those women and men over 40 where—and for women, actually, it's important not to overlook this because the signs of this disease in women particularly show up earlier.

I also was pleased to sign the lung health action plan this past summer. It called on the government to establish an action plan focused on health promotion and on disease prevention, detection and management. And I advocated for a constituent of mine who suffers from IPF, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, to have Esbriet, a vital drug and the only medication currently available for the treatment of the disease, to be funded through the Exceptional Access Program. I was thrilled because I had advocated for this for years and it just became effective for qualified individuals this past August. In fact, I've received many different forms of appreciation, and I want to thank everyone who took the time to send me their kind notes and appreciation, as it's why we're here. We're really here to try and make a difference. I'm very passionate about this issue, and I will continue to advocate for lung health, as we did with the passing of second reading of the Lung Health Act.

However, Ontario's industries, be it manufacturing, be it agri-food, be it restaurants or small business—those sectors need to breathe easy as well, Speaker. All parties

have committed to phasing out coal, but it's the PC Party that recognizes specifically that there's a delicate balance that needs to happen to ensure we maintain the much-needed manufacturing jobs in Ontario that keep our economy moving.

As the Premier said earlier this morning, we do not live in isolation from the rest of the world. With that in mind, we should be mindful of the cross-border pollution and the need to not overburden Ontarians with hefty regulations. We should be creating a more competitive environment for our industry and manufacturing sectors, but in order to do so, this government needs to work alongside industry to help create a clean environment and a healthy economy. Frankly, Speaker, recent events suggest—and prove, I dare say—that this is not how this particular government operates.

Last week, the farming community was blindsided with the government's decision for an 80% reduction of neonics used for soy and corn crops by 2017. This industry, we heard time and again, was under the assumption that they were working alongside this government in addressing the issue of bee mortality, which we all care about. Focused on best practices, they were working on innovative solutions to contain the residue and reduce the exposure of bees to dust. Further, the recent Health Canada study that very same afternoon that the introduction was made indicated that the number of incident reports associated with neonic pesticides during the planting period in 2014 was 70% lower. That means bee mortality had dropped 70% lower than in 2013.

Despite all of this, though, and further, the fact is that nowhere in the Liberal recommendations did they consider what the industry was doing with regard to bee mortality. Again, I repeat: Nowhere in their announcement last week did they take into consideration the advancements that industry had taken to help in the reduction of bee mortality in Ontario. I might also add that the Health Canada report did not suggest a ban either, yet the Liberals again went in their own direction.

This has to stop. We need to base regulation and legislation on science and fact, not just a knee-jerk reaction. Again, this type of knee-jerk activity has the potential to seriously affect the economy and drive jobs and industry out of our province.

When it comes down to where we're going with Bill 9, I would suggest to you again, Speaker, that we don't need this legislation. We've already phased out coal plants for power generation. I would suggest that if this Liberal government was truly concerned about this issue, they would be meeting their own targets for greenhouse gas reductions.

This bill does not address how to reduce private sector coal use, and there is no plan to convert existing coal plants into natural gas or biomass facilities, as suggested by the Auditor General.

I would close off at this time, before I pass the baton over to my colleague, by saying and suggesting that this government should be inviting industry and other stakeholders to work alongside them in creating policies

that will help our environment but will also ensure that we foster a strong and inviting business climate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Huron–Bruce. She is sharing her time with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I recognize the member.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join this debate. I didn't realize this was a rather long debate today—one hour. My goodness gracious. But I want to congratulate my colleague from Huron–Bruce for a great beginning to the debate. I only hope I can be as strong and as eloquent in my closing. I realize she has an important engagement. I wish you the very best with that as well.

1710

That's one thing about being in this chamber. We can be here for part of the day, but we've all got meetings going on continuously here as well, and I thank my colleague for taking the time to come down and lead our charge on this piece of legislation. I say it kind of tongue-in-cheek—this important piece of legislation. It barely makes up the page. It's a good thing we do work in two official languages or we could probably do this on the back of a napkin. You know how they say, "This bill was written on the back of a napkin"? This could be written on the back—you don't see them anymore, but they used to have these penny matches, as they called them, where you flipped it open; you could have written the bill on the inside of that.

It brings me to the point that my colleague was making. Why do we really need this piece of legislation? I'm going to be as kind as possible here. I know the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is not going to like this, and he's certainly not going to like me for it, but I'm going to be blunt. I remember when the new government was sworn in and he was made the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. He was none too happy. He was none too happy, and you saw it in the media, where on that day or the day after, he announced that he wouldn't be running in the next election, that this would be his last term in the Legislature. He may change his mind on that, but do you remember how angry he was that he got what is viewed by most people as a demotion in cabinet? He was upset.

Mr. John Fraser: Nice guy.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, it's the facts, John. You might not like it, but we all read the media stories, and what are we supposed to do? Rub people's shoulders and just tell them what they want to hear?

So he brought out this bill—this worthless bill that does absolutely nothing. You might as well be banning steel wheels on tractors or the old crank telephones. They don't exist anymore. There's no reason, no need for this piece of legislation. We've burned the last piece of coal. The minister said himself that he gave that last lump of coal from Atikokan to the member from St. Catharines for his work on the file, and presumably for the great work that he's done in this Legislature since 1977.

Mr. John Fraser: He should have saved it for you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I've already said I'll be getting coal for Christmas, and I'm not too concerned. It wouldn't be the first Christmas that I got a lump of coal.

So why are we debating this? Here we are ramming through pieces of legislation, using time allocation to put through legislation because the government doesn't want to debate it, but we're going to debate a bill that does what's already been done. It should be like we're going to have a bill that determines that "yesterday" will forever from now on be known as "the day before today" or that "the day before today" will forever be known as "yesterday," and we're going to get that into legislation so nobody can change it, so that if somebody comes here after me—somebody who just might try to do something really strange—they cannot change the name from "yesterday" to something else. We need to have this put into legislation perhaps. So this could be the bill of redundancy or the minister's axiomatic piece of legislation—

Interjection: Piece of what?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Piece of—yes; I'm being polite. My friends in the third party are finding this a little bit funny, because they're coming to the same conclusion. What in the name of Sam Hill are we doing with this piece of paper?

I recognize that because he was upset the Premier said, "Look, bring out a bill." Now we're getting near the end of the fall session and they said, "Well, we better debate this bill." It's Bill 9, and we're already debating bills up in the 40s or 30s. Today we had time allocation on Bill 35, a bill that ironically, Mr. Speaker, has, in one form or another, been before this Legislature since 2012. I know that my friend from Bramalea–Gore–Malton spoke to the time allocation on that bill today. I remember him sitting on committee with me on that bill when it was Bill 34 in the previous Parliament. It died on the order paper because Dalton McGuinty decided that, even though winter hadn't arrived yet, he was taking a walk in the snow.

The next time it died because Kathleen Wynne, Premier Wynne, called an election, sought a new mandate from the people. Congratulations to the Premier. Congratulations to all the new people who were elected. Good for you.

It now comes back in this Parliament as Bill 35. We need to ram that through the House, Speaker, because we're running out of time. We've got to get moving on this stuff. Now we're going to spend the Legislature's time debating this one page. We could make a little paper airplane out of it and throw it exactly where it belongs. If there was a basket over there, maybe I could hit it.

People out in TV land ask themselves, "What do they do down there?" My brother—I shouldn't repeat this, but I talk to him quite often on the phone, and he will say things like, "So what did you do down there this week? Nothing, right?" He's kind of cynical in that way, but I think he says it a little bit in jest. He says, "Did you guys do anything productive down there in the Legislature this week?" When he reads about this, I'm going to have a

tough time arguing with him, because he's going to look at this Bill 9 and he's going to say, "Wow. You guys actually are debating that piece of legislation?"

Here's a bill that accomplishes what has already been accomplished. Wow. That's quite a feat. So let's get back to the beginnings. The Liberals go on and on and on about eliminating coal, and you know what? Congratulations, because you did close the last coal-fired generating station, but it was only after breaking your promise several times. In fairness to the minister, he wasn't in the cabinet or he wasn't even in the—I think he was in Manitoba then.

Back in 2003, Dalton McGuinty campaigned on a commitment, which nobody that knew anything about the energy sector in the province of Ontario or how easy or difficult it was to accomplish things—no one believed for a moment that they could actually accomplish this, which was a promise to close all coal-fired generation by 2007. That was four short years away.

That seems like eons ago. At the time, we had about 6,500 megawatts of coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario: about 4,000 at Nanticoke, 2,000 at Lambton, 320 or so at Thunder Bay and about 160 or so at Atikokan. That was your coal-fired generation here in the province of Ontario. They were going to close all of that within four years.

You know what? Sadly, I believe it actually helped them get elected, because they won a lot of seats in Toronto. They won a majority—I think it was 72 seats at that time. They haven't got there yet again. It was about 72 seats they won.

Mr. Han Dong: Three.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Was it 73?

Mr. Han Dong: I think so.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, whatever.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm younger than you are.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So 72 or 73 seats—I don't have the encyclopedia in front of me; I'm just going on memory. But they won a majority with around 72 or 73 seats, and a lot of it, I think, had to do with their promises, particularly to the urban people, that they were going to close these coal plants because they convinced them that the coal plants were killing people here in the province of Ontario.

1720

So they won their election, and then, lo and behold, "We're not going to be able to do that by 2007." By that time, people had become conditioned that Liberals will make a promise and it has the shelf life of a quart of milk outside the refrigerator. That's the shelf life of a Liberal promise. As soon as you put that carton of milk on the shelf, Dalton McGuinty was, "Oh, we're not going to be able to do that." But then again, that's not the real kicker, because they also gave you another promise, and that was that they wouldn't raise your taxes, and then they brought in the biggest single tax increase in Ontario's history, the health tax. Do you remember that, the health tax? "We will not raise your taxes," and then they brought in the health tax. So, unfortunately, it became something that

people became accustomed to, that a Liberal would promise something and then they would break it.

Then they talked about running on principles. I have always said that Liberal principles—I'm trying to be kind, but they change. They change. It's sort of like, you know, you're wondering what you're going to do to make some supper. You open the fridge and see all these vegetables in there. There's some turnips and some carrots, there's some corn and some peas, and there's some potatoes or whatever. You blend that all together with a broth—I wouldn't know how to start—but you make a soup out of it. Okay?

But for the Liberals, if you went back into that refrigerator a couple of weeks later, there could be a whole different group of vegetables in that refrigerator. You take them out—because you don't want to throw them away; you don't want to waste them—and you make a nice soup out of them. You might have a ham in there as well. You might put some chicken skeleton in there to get some broth—whatever.

That could be called Liberal principle soup, because every time you open that fridge, you're going to get a new recipe. Every time you open that fridge, it's going to be different. That could be Liberal principle soup, because every time it's going to be different. And they're going to stand by them. They're going to stand by them, because those are the principles they're going to govern by.

Let's get back to the coal plants. Then they said, "We're going to close the coal plants by 2009." No, no. Then it was 2012. No. And then it was 2014. Finally, if you say something often enough and keep moving the yardsticks every time—Liberals talk about achieving, overachieving. You hear the finance minister always saying, "We've overachieved. We've beaten our targets every year." It's like they've lowered the bar every time you turn around. It's like if they're making the 100 metres 90 metres and then they're rejoicing because they're setting new world records. Let's just make the race shorter. The marathon becomes 24 miles, and we've got a new world record. Roger Bannister would turn over in his grave if he realized what you guys were doing.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know, the guy who broke the four-minute mile.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You're not that old.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not quite that old, but I read about it. But, Jim, you are. You might have been there. You might have been watching the race, I say to my friend from St. Catharines.

That's the problem with them. They're always moving the yardsticks to try to make it appear that they have accomplished something when, in fact, they've accomplished nothing, and this bill is a good example of that. They're now going to enforce in legislation that we're not going to burn coal. Wow, what a victory. I'm sure they're celebrating on every street corner right now, because the Liberals are now bringing in a bill that they're not going to burn coal. But they couldn't have

been in that big a hurry to pass it either, because it's Bill 9 and we're already passing bills that are—Bill 35 is going to time allocation and some of the other bills—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Bill 10 is already in law.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Jim Bradley is showing me something that says “beer” on it. Now, don't tell me they're going to ban beer. You won't get away with that one. You might get away with banning coal in the province of Ontario, but you're not going to get away with banning beer. We'll fight you tooth and nail on that one; I'll tell you that right now. I don't care how many times you move the yardsticks on that one; you're not going to get it through.

So they're not getting these coal plants closed, and they're trying to take credit for all these things, so then they bring out this Green Energy Act. That's what was going to get us off coal, they said. “That's going to get us off coal.” We never stopped burning a single megawatt of coal because of the Green Energy Act. It was gas plants. They built 20 gas plants, and that's why we've been able to close the coal plants.

But gas plants emit CO₂—admittedly less than a coal plant, but climate change is all about CO₂. The minister of climate change says that we've got to reduce our CO₂ emissions, but we're burning more gas than we've ever burned in the province of Ontario. Are we burning coal? No, we're not, but we're burning more natural gas to produce power.

You see, all of those wind turbines that they've forced on people in rural Ontario, against their will—when those don't turn, when the wind doesn't blow, you've got to back it up with something. In most cases, it means that the gas plants have to be fired up, because the nuclear fleet is already running. The nuclear fleet does not have the flexibility that the gas plants have.

But what happens, then, when all of those windmills that we've built now, at an exorbitant cost, and have signed contracts with the developers that are breaking our electricity ratepayers—seniors who can't pay their hydro bills, because the hydro bills, especially in the winter-time, are more than their old age pension—well, we've got to pay those wind developers, because the Liberal government, under the Green Energy Act, authored by George Smitherman, compels them to pay ridiculous prices.

I've got friends who've got solar panels, and they've got contracts that pay them—get this—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, you might want to sit down, Mario, because when I tell you this, you're going to want to be sitting down: 80.2 cents a kilowatt hour.

Interjection: Whoa.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. I was talking to a friend of mine at a wake the other day. He's got himself and his three friends living in an area of Renfrew county—I won't identify them, but they've all got an under-10-kilowatt solar development on their property, and they're

all getting 80.2 cents a kilowatt hour for any power they've generated. He said, “You know, the neighbours and a lot of people were mad at us, because ‘Why should you be getting all that money for that power?’”

I've actually got to tell you: I helped them get hooked up, because they're my constituents. I helped them with their issues with the OPA to get them hooked up, because they're my constituents. So what he said to me was—and I'll paraphrase it afterwards—“If that Liberal government is dumb enough to pay me 80.2 cents a kilowatt hour for electricity, well, by George, I'm smart enough to take it.” I would say that if that Liberal government was dumb enough to offer 80.2 cents a kilowatt hour, I'm going to be smart enough to make sure that, if there are people benefiting by it, they're going to be the ones living in my riding.

At the same time, I said to every one of those people—and they agreed—“Do you think this is a good idea for electricity generation in the province of Ontario?” They said, “Are you crazy? It's insane to pay that kind of money to get power, absolutely insane.” But the Liberals decided that they were going to do that.

1730

Solar doesn't make up the bulk amount of our electricity; it makes up a very, very small percentage. But then let's talk about the wind, which makes up the bulk of the renewable portfolio.

You know this thing they call the global adjustment? A lot of people don't understand it. A lot of people don't understand the global adjustment, but they're all paying for it. Everybody pays for it. Whether it's embedded in your hydro bill or whether it's delineated separately on your hydro bill, you're all paying for it; and every time the Ontario Energy Board allows an increase in the price of electricity, which now, by the way, is at 14 cents a kilowatt hour at peak time—14 cents a kilowatt hour. When this government came to power, it was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour; now it's as high as 14 cents a kilowatt hour.

When I talk to seniors on fixed incomes in my riding, they are beside themselves trying to figure out how they are going to pay their hydro bills under these circumstances, and according to the government's own statements, that price is only going one way.

Interjection: Up?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's going up, 46% more over the next five years. When you're already against the wall, how can you pay 46% more?

They ask me, “Well, John, why do they keep signing more and more of these contracts for this expensive power? We can't afford it now. Why do they keep doing that?” I say, “I can't answer the why.” I cannot answer the why, but I think my friend from Prince Edward-Hastings pretty much coined it when he said “blind ideology,” because, you see, at this point they refuse to retreat. They refuse to say, “We've got to stop this,” because they are so committed to it, wrong as it may be, they don't want to admit the folly of their ways. So they keep plowing forward and hoping that somehow, somehow, this is going to change on its own.

The success of your economy is directly related to the cost of your electricity. This province was built on accessible, affordable, reliable electricity—accessible, affordable, reliable electricity. We simply don't have that anymore.

My colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, last week at estimates, brought in—and I asked the minister about it later in the day—some hydro bills from Manitoba and from British Columbia. If you're in Manitoba, the all-in cost of hydro is about a third of what it is in Ontario, because when you add in all of the extras in Ontario—the debt retirement charge, the regulatory charges, the delivery charges, the HST—you add it all up together, it's just about crippling, the price of power and what it's doing to people. But this government just turns a deaf ear to it. They're not interested in hearing what the public has to say about the price of power. That's regrettable, because while we can argue till the cows come home, as they say, about electricity policy, what truly is wrong is when a government refuses to listen.

I'm getting a note here. I don't know exactly what it's about, but it certainly has to do with my friend from Algoma—Manitoulin, a Chapeau constituent: \$1,816 a month for their hydro bill, plus a \$10,000 invoice dating back to 2012. He's got in quotations, "smart meter." I think what he meant was "dumb meter." But I don't think I have time to begin to talk about all of the problems associated with billing here in the province of Ontario and the absolute mess that Hydro One brought upon their customers in the province of Ontario.

I had a resident who had a home of about 1,100 square feet—

Mr. Todd Smith: A small house.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, up where I come from, it's modest, but we don't live in the rich areas—and he got a bill for \$18,000 for a month for hydro. He had to argue back and forth that that couldn't be right. He ended up coming to our office. Fortunately we were able to straighten it out in fairly short order, but why should he ever have had to come to my office? If you know anything about electricity, you would know that you couldn't possibly burn that much electricity in 1,100 square feet. You wouldn't have enough service. You wouldn't have enough amps coming into that house to ever use that amount of power. If you had every circuit wide open 24/7 for a month, you couldn't do it. There's just not enough capacity within the home. There's not enough electricity burning devices or appliances in the home. But yet, somebody who was sitting in some bureaucratic office somewhere decided that if that's your bill, you're going to have to pay it.

That's what has happened under this government, these kinds of things that are just unfortunate. It was a senior citizen, by the way, on a fixed income. Can you imagine when they got that bill and then they were told by the utility, "No, you're going to have to pay it. It must be your bill. It must be right"? Well, I'm thankful that we got that straightened out, but it never, ever should have gotten there.

I guarantee you, there's not a rural member, for sure, in this Legislature who has not dealt with significant issues with regard to billing. Much of it was related to problems in the utility's accounting system itself, but a lot of them were failures in smart meters, inaccuracies and some kinds of other technical glitches. But when you're on the other side of a technical glitch, that's cold comfort when somebody is sending you a bill and threatening to cut your power off because you can't pay it.

But I don't want to spend the few moments that I have left going over hydro bill after hydro bill after hydro bill because that is not the real issue here. The issue is the tying up of this Legislature to debate this piece of legislation. Why? I say this to the minister: We all have to account for ourselves. We have to account for how we've spent our time. You'll be asked: Did you spend your day productively? Did you accomplish something for the greater good today? Did you do something that helped your fellow man, your neighbour, your colleagues, your family? Did you do something today that was positive? Was your time spent in a way that will be of benefit? The time in this Legislature today, I say to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, is not being used very productively. This bill was totally unnecessary. You know it yourself—in your heart of hearts, you know this bill was not necessary. We ceased burning coal in the province of Ontario. We know that this government is not going to burn coal. They're committed to it, and we know how how Liberals honour their commitments. Ahem, excuse me.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

1740

So we know they're not going to burn coal. We know also that they're going to be in government for the next four years, so those coal plants are going to sit idle for the next four years. They will be burning no coal. Does he really think that a piece of legislation was necessary to determine what might happen four years from now? Did he really think it was necessary?

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. Did he really think that any other party was going to go back to burning coal? We've had that argument. We've lost that argument. We've moved on.

It is now our job to ensure that the electricity system that we do have—as much as you people have screwed it up, it is going to be our job to ensure that the system we inherit, to the greatest degree, is one that we can make the changes that ensure that those jobs that used to be ours in Ontario—maybe we can bring them back. Those industries that used to believe that Ontario was the right place to establish a plant because this is the place where we've got skilled workers, we've got a great transportation network, but we also have affordable, accessible, reliable electricity—maybe we can bring them back. That's going to take a while. We're committed to doing that.

But this piece of legislation is nothing but a waste of this Legislature's time. We should be spending it on more productive things and debating some of those significant pieces that you are ramming down our throats.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I was so excited to respond to the member from Nipissing-Pembroke that I stood up early; it was so exciting.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Don't forget about Renfrew; they'll be sending you a letter.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Oh, sorry. Let me get it right then: Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Honestly, I've said this time and time again and I've got to say it once again; I'm sure the member already knows this and he has heard this: The member is one of the most entertaining speakers in this House. I think we can all agree on that. You may not agree with him, but you definitely have to admit that he is entertaining.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: And you can agree with him, too.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: And you can agree with him, too, if you like, but he's definitely entertaining.

A couple of things that he brought up that I think are quite interesting: One of the things he said—and I'm not going to say it nearly as eloquently as he said it—is there's a certain prioritizing in the bills that the government is choosing to bring forward that is somewhat questionable. The priorities of this government, in terms of what bills they're time-allocating, which bills they're ramming through, which bills they've chosen to proceed with given our limited time in the House, are somewhat questionable, and I think the member brought that up in a very eloquent manner.

I have other bills that I certainly think were not necessary or other bills that were very important that weren't brought up—and I might disagree on which of the bills they are. One of the bills I think was essentially important that we didn't see this House or this government take priority on was the bill that would protect public participation, that would protect our ability to have dissent, the anti-SLAPP legislation. The bill that the government did choose to move on before they brought forward the anti-SLAPP legislation was the better business climate bill, which essentially added no new powers, added no new regulation-making authority to the government, really didn't do anything that the government couldn't already do. The government could already release reports. The government could already make efficiencies.

This is another example of the government not prioritizing the bills, and that's an important point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First, I want to thank the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for the career advice. It's always great to get career advice from someone who has such a lifetime commitment to a seat on the opposition benches.

I also just want to point out that this bill is very important because the question is being put: Would I trust his party, if it was ever sitting here, to start opening coal plants again? Absolutely. Your party federally—the wonderful member MP Gallant, your dear friend the federal member, who I know you have such a solid relationship with, is part of a government unprecedented in human history in subsidizing fossil fuels. The government of Canada takes more tax dollars to subsidize natural gas, to burn bitumen, to make oil, and then they subsidize the pipelines. It is the biggest greenhouse gas disaster.

So if you can vote for a party federally that is the big, big, big smoke of GHGs, it should not be much of a problem for you to go back and turn coal plants on, because I've heard members opposite say one of the dumbest things we ever did was do coal plants.

Actions speak louder than words, my friend from Huron-Bruce said. Yes, your total contribution was a 15% reduction in coal closures, which you talk up like it was parting the Red Sea. We closed 85% of coal production right now. We're electrifying our entire transportation system. We're working with manufacturers to be a world leader in net zero vehicles.

I have to tell you, my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is a great man with a great sense of a humor and a future in stand-up comedy like no one else in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join this debate, one of the few debates that we're able to actually have here in the Legislature, because the government time and time again continues to muzzle the official opposition parties and muzzle members of the public as well.

Just a bit of a news flash for you—before I congratulate the members from Huron-Bruce and Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for their well-thought-out one hour of debate on this bill—those coal plants are closed; right? They're closed. Nobody's going to open those coal plants again. We do not need this piece of legislation. This legislation is nothing. Look at this. I've seen hydro bills that are more substantial than this. Bill 9 has absolutely nothing in it.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke brought up some incredible points. He's obviously not just a funny man; he has his facts right, too. The fact is that hydro bills, as a result of that government's actions, have gone up 56%. The Auditor General says so. I think at that time it was a him; it was Jim McCarter who said so. Now we have a female Auditor General in the province. But the Auditor General's office reports that those hydro rates are going to triple again. As a matter of fact, we're going to see that by 2020 those hydro bills are going to be higher than any CO₂ emission has ever made it into the atmosphere, because people in rural Ontario now can't afford their hydro bills. They can't afford them now. But the Auditor General is telling us, and the Ministry of Finance continues to tell us, that those energy

bills, the electricity bills, are going to continue to skyrocket.

This is a lot of sound and fury signifying nothing. There is nothing in this bill but a PR scam for the Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, a lot of fun to stand up here this afternoon on the behalf of the residents of Windsor–Tecumseh and speak to comments made by the member from Huron–Bruce, who gave a very serious interpretation of Bill 9, and then to listen to the very colourful member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—always a delight, Speaker, to listen to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Sometimes I feel like I'm in the back row of an audience on Entertainment Tonight.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You used to live there.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I used to live there—in fact, as a reporter I used to cover your father when he was a member. He was a good member, a great member, but he was never as colourful an orator as you, sir. You have taken it to a new regard.

I have to say, I would move back to Pembroke tomorrow if, as a constituent of this member, he would get me 80 cents a kilowatt hour on a solar—I would put that on my home. Wouldn't you, Speaker? He helped his constituents get 80 cents a kilowatt hour on the FIT program for solar in their neighbourhood, and the rest of us of course are making that up because we're paying higher prices across the province because of that.

Hands up: Who wouldn't want to get 80 cents a kilowatt hour for a solar project in your home? Hands up. Who wouldn't want that? I think we all would, and only this guy can get it for you, if you live in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, because he's the representative. He probably has it on his shed, too.

1750

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I don't.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: How about on the outhouse? Is it on the outhouse, John?

No, seriously, Speaker, a real delight to listen to the member, and I certainly wish him and his family a very merry Christmas after receiving his very colourful Christmas card here in the House this afternoon as well.

Interjection: Does it have a solar panel on it?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It doesn't have a solar panel in the background on it. No, it doesn't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his final comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, the member for Prince Edward–Hastings and the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, who used to be a resident of my riding—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I did say “Bramalea–Gore–Malton.” I said you first. Relax, Jagmeet. I would never forget you, but I can't forget Percy, either—Windsor–Tecumseh as well.

I want to thank them for their comments. I appreciate their views. I say to the Minister of the Environment that in spite of his two-minute criticism of my address, my views have not changed. We still don't believe that this bill was necessary, and I can assure you that if there are so many important pieces of legislation that the government wants to talk to us about to get through this House before the Christmas recess, we're all ears. But, unfortunately, that's not what has been happening. What has been happening is, we come into the House and the House leader stands up, takes the floor and introduces time allocation.

We have spent as much time debating time allocation as we spent debating legislation almost in this House since we came back here on the 20th of October. I somehow don't believe that that was what this chamber was designed for. We're here to debate the legislation itself—the merits, the pros, the cons, the weaknesses—to see if we can't make it stronger.

This bill—there's nothing we can do to make it stronger, but, Speaker, there is nothing we can do to make it any weaker, either. Why don't we just move on, tear it up, forget it ever happened and bring in some bills here to this House that the people of Ontario really need? How about a bill that does something about our economy? How about a bill that does something about employment? The government is lost when it comes to doing something that would actually help the average taxpayer in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed an honour to stand here, as the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, and start talking for an hour—or five minutes, depending on your ruling. Do you want to break now, Speaker, or do you want me to start rolling?

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'll keep going?

I want to stand and speak to the bill, Bill 9. It's An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities—“the cessation of coal use.”

Speaker, I have to tell you, I'm going to be a bit redundant, I guess, after listening to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I used to work at the CBC; I was declared redundant there as well. I won't be as funny and I won't be as eloquent as the member, but let me get started.

This bill is also known as the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, and on this side of the House, we think of it as—perhaps it could be known as the “Why are we spending time on a bill when we've already taken the steps, already shut down the coal-burning power-generation plants in Ontario? Oh, yes. I guess we need to change the channel” act. Or the “Let's pat ourselves on the back and tell ourselves we've done a good thing here” act. Or how about the “Gosh, we missed our deadline for closing the coal-powered plants four or five times, so now that we

finally got there, let's pretend we knew what we were doing" act?

Don't get me wrong, Speaker; the bill makes sense, believe it or not. It made sense before the plants were actually shut down or converted to other fuels. We all know there are no more coal-burning power-generating facilities in Ontario, and there haven't been any coal-burning facilities for some time. Most people would agree that that's a good thing, so some of us are wondering why we're here today discussing this bill, as opposed to debating more topical issues.

Speaker, as you know, the government has been beating up on the opposition parties lately, shutting down debate, imposing time allocation, not willing to listen to further debate on matters and bills that were substantive. We've even gone to night sittings. Some of us were here last night till 9:30.

So why isn't the government putting on the table the issues and the bills that require lengthy, in-depth debate and discussion? Somebody wants to spin the news cycle. Somebody in some corner office down the hall wants the public to think that this is new. This isn't new; this is retro. This is dredging up the ashes, Minister, and fanning the flames. This is a Hail Mary pass, tossed in the hope that some of the people can be fooled into believing that this is all new and exciting.

This bill specifies four generating facilities that will never be allowed to burn coal again: the Atikokan plant, which stopped burning coal in late 2012; the Lambton Generating Station, which ceased burning coal in September 2013; in Haldimand county, the Nanticoke Generating Station, which used to be one of Canada's top 10 single sources of greenhouse gases, and hasn't burned coal since 2013. As a footnote to give some historical perspective, 201 years ago, in 1813, that's where the Battle of Nanticoke was fought. The Norfolk militia beat back a marauding band of Americans. The battleground was declared a national historic site in 1924. If we get back to the present day, the fourth one, the Thunder Bay Generating Station, specified in this bill, hasn't burned a piece of coal since April.

So why is this bill in front of us today? The smoke from those coal-burning emission stacks is long gone, but this bill seems to be based on—wait for it—smoke and mirrors. Coal used to provide 25% of Ontario's electricity, and the emissions from those plants were polluting—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Oh, you can do better than that. You're from the CBC. You can do better than that.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Minister, I told you I wouldn't be as erudite, as funny, as humorous or as engaging as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

But still, we're dealing with this bill today. I expect that my friend the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change has his reasons. We don't always agree, but I respect the minister. I'll say that again: I respect the minister. He's very intelligent. He has great passion for the environment. His concerns about the challenges that

we face due to climate change are well documented. I respect the minister for expressing those views.

I'm still curious, if not downright suspicious, why this proposed legislation is on our desks at this time. Getting rid of coal was a good idea. Even Energy Minister Chiarelli admitted to knowing of four or five young girls on his daughter's hockey team that he used to coach about 10 years ago who had asthma so bad that they had to use puffers.

Asthma continues to be a problem for some people. I'll just give you a little background information, Speaker, or should I wrap up now? I see you're getting nervous over there. This is a good chance; I'm going on to another side topic. With your permission, Speaker, I'll end it here for now and try to pick up the hour someplace else in the week ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 28, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNONCES DU GOUVERNEMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the Premier or her parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

1800

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to be joined today with my colleague the member for Perth–Wellington. We asked a tag-team question in the House last week, and because of the standing orders, I think it requires that the first one who stood initiates the late show, so I'm speaking on behalf of my friend the member for Perth–Wellington, and together we're making our presentation this evening.

Last week, as I said, my colleague the member for Perth–Wellington and I raised an important issue with the Premier during question period. We asked the Premier whether or not she thought it was appropriate for a defeated Liberal candidate to be making public announcements on behalf of the government about infrastructure funding going to area municipalities when local MPPs had not been officially notified.

We further established that this clear breach of respect for parliamentary democracy had already taken place, as the former Liberal candidate in Perth–Wellington, who now works as a policy adviser in the office of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, had sent out a news release on behalf of the local Liberal riding association, taking credit for the funding while at the same time

attacking the official opposition with false and misleading statements. And it gets worse when you consider the fact that the former Liberal candidate most likely had access to privileged information on the funding before it was released.

The Premier's replies in this House were not satisfactory either to the member for Perth–Wellington or to me. In her response to our second question, she indicated she had no “information on the specifics” of the news release. Hearing that, and having a copy of the news release in my possession, I immediately asked a page to deliver it to the Premier to back up and verify the points we were making. She glanced at the news release and then continued her answer by saying the news release wasn't an “announcement,” but instead, it was a “statement of something that is happening.” I think she believed that government staff had sent her the news release.

My quotes from the Premier are taken from Hansard, the verbatim, official record of debates in the Ontario Legislature. Mr. Speaker, any fair-minded, objective person reading the news release that the Liberal candidate had sent out would conclude that it was his intention to announce the funding on behalf of the government, take credit for it, and in the process, diminish the role of the official opposition.

Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected in 1990, this sort of thing never happened, to the best of my recollection, even though I served in the opposition to the then NDP government of the day. In fact, if municipalities in my riding were in line to receive roads funding from the province, for example, I would receive a phone call from the local Stratford office of the Ministry of Transportation, and I would be informed of the funding allocations they were providing to the municipalities before the municipalities were even informed. As such, the announcements of government funding were non-partisan, and rightly so.

How things have changed. Now, 24 years later, we have a defeated Liberal candidate making the public announcements, slighting MPPs who were actually elected by the people just a few months ago, and attacking our party for good measure.

In the past, when MPPs have raised points of privilege complaining about governments making key announcements outside of this House, a former Speaker, in his ruling, spoke of the “syndrome of casual diminishment of the legitimate and key role of the opposition.” This is one of those situations, another example of the syndrome of casual diminishment of the legitimate and key role of the opposition that the former Speaker lamented.

As someone who has been privileged to serve on both sides of this House, in opposition and in government, and having seen it from both sides, I would offer the government members my observation through the years that while we can always make a conscious decision to do the right thing, it is a breach of parliamentary tradition to show such lack of regard and respect to duly elected members and the democratic process that caused their elections. Indeed, it is an affront to the people who

elected them in the 107 ridings across this province, and it cannot go unchallenged.

I call upon the Premier, tomorrow, to rise in this House on a point of order, correct her record, and acknowledge and admit that the Liberal candidate's news release was in fact intended to be an announcement. I further call upon the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to call in his new policy adviser and admonish him to never again use privileged information that that office possesses in that manner.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

In response, the parliamentary assistant to the Premier, the member from Etobicoke North, has the floor for up to five minutes.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Premièrement, je veux saluer mon honorable collègue from Wellington–Halton Hills, speaking on behalf of the MPP for Perth–Wellington. Sir, your remarks are always taken under advisement. I salute you for the measured, balanced and generally respectful tone that you conduct yourself with in this Parliament.

Having said that, I hope to address your particular concerns in a moment. I would simply say that when you complain of the syndrome of casual diminishment, I have to say, as a physician, I feel like prescribing something, but hopefully these remarks will actually address some of your concerns.

I appreciate this opportunity. I think our government is still proud of our record when it comes to infrastructure investments in Ontario.

Notre gouvernement est fier de notre travail et de nos investissements dans les infrastructures en Ontario.

On November 14, the government announced that through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, 426 communities across the province will receive annual funding to support improvements and repairs to roads, bridges, water and waste water projects.

Le 14 novembre dernier, notre gouvernement a annoncé qu'avec le support du Fonds ontarien pour l'infrastructure communautaire, 426 communautés à travers la province recevront un financement annuel afin de moderniser et réparer les routes, les ponts et les systèmes d'eau potable et d'eau usée, ainsi que d'autres infrastructures essentielles.

These improvements to local infrastructure, Speaker, will help revitalize the community while creating jobs and strengthening the local economy.

The press release directly referenced by my honourable colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills, by members opposite, was issued by the local Liberal association and links directly to this public Infrastructure Ontario announcement. It highlights positive action being done by the Ontario government. In fact, all of the information contained within the release was already public at the time that the Liberal association issued its press release. I repeat: All the information contained within the release was already public at the time the Liberal association issued its press release. There, of course, no doubt, is the nub of the issue, including the fact that the

PCs, by the way, voted against our budget and didn't support those particular vital investments.

The release also contained a link to the public website which lists all 426 communities that received this funding. So not only is it public, but it's generally broadcast across the province.

I would encourage all members of this House and the public to make their communities aware of such important investments. In fact, all parties generally do. I could come up myself with countless examples of riding associations, by the way, from all parties, including the Conservative Party, our honourable opposition, commenting on government actions. I would generally applaud anyone who highlights these vital investments for the public.

I applaud, Speaker, with your indulgence, Mr. Skinner for participating in political activities and supporting his local communities.

As the Premier said, to requote, if the Conservative member had wanted to talk about these investments that were being made in his riding, I think that would be a very good thing. We would, in fact, encourage it. I can't help but wonder if the only reason the member from Perth-Wellington is upset—perhaps there are others—is because he was caught failing to communicate this important information to his constituents.

Speaker, this is a great announcement and good news for communities across Ontario and Perth-Wellington.

I conclude with respect to my honourable colleagues from Wellington-Halton Hills and Perth-Wellington. Thank you, sir.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1809.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
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of Ontario**

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(Hansard)**

Wednesday 3 December 2014

Mercredi 3 décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 décembre 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning.
Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT (AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE ACT, 1996), 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'ASSURANCE AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996 SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Mr. Leal moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Leal.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Beaches—East York.

Good morning. I'm honoured to rise in the House today to speak to second reading of the Agriculture Insurance Act.

As we all know, Ontario farmers grow and harvest a diverse range of crops and livestock. When unforeseen challenges such as pests, weather and disease strike, production insurance is there to provide coverage for losses and yield reductions. In Ontario, production insurance is currently available for nearly 90 different agricultural products, but Ontario farmers grow and raise more than 200 commodities. This leaves some farmers' products ineligible for production insurance.

If passed, the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act would give farmers who produce agricultural products other than crops and perennial plants access to the insurance they need to safeguard their investments. This would level the playing field so that our producers could access the same kind of protection as every other farmer in Canada today. This would help to grow their farms and, in turn, Ontario's agri-food sector.

While serving as Minister of Agriculture and Food, Premier Wynne issued the agri-food growth challenge. It calls on the sector to double its annual rate of growth and to create 120,000 new jobs by 2020. This challenge recognizes the significant opportunity that this sector has to

offer. It is an ambitious target, but I have every confidence in our ability to meet the challenge. As Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I'm fully committed to growing Ontario's agri-food sector and meeting the Premier's challenge.

The agricultural sector is a cornerstone of employment and economic growth in this great province. It employs over 760,000 Ontarians, exports over \$11 billion worth of agri-food products and generates \$34 billion in GDP for the province of Ontario.

We're already making progress towards meeting the Premier's challenge. Between 2012 and 2013, Ontario's agri-food sector saw a 44% increase in food processing investment while adding 17,000 new and sustainable jobs. This is the kind of growth, on all sides of this House, we want to continue achieving, working in partnership with the sector.

To create future opportunities for growth, farmers need business supports that allow them to compete in national and international markets. Just as farmers and agri-food innovators are evolving with the industry, so too must government assist them in their day-to-day needs.

The proposed amendments aren't a new idea; rather, they're an evolution of a concept that has been in development for over 50 years. The amendments we're proposing now are the next phase of that evolution. In 2013, more than 14,000 farmers in Ontario had production insurance. Their policies covered five million acres of farmland and \$2.9 billion in liabilities.

Ontario's agri-food sector is strong, but not without its challenges. Agricultural markets are volatile, prices fluctuate and yields are at the mercy of many different factors. Our province needs effective business risk management programs in place to cope with these fluctuations and give our farmers the stability they need to grow and create more jobs in the province of Ontario.

A robust production insurance program is an important component of a well-developed business risk management plan, and making production insurance available to more agricultural commodities helps farmers manage the risks they face every day.

Mr. Speaker, expanding our production insurance program would also help us to responsibly manage the province's finances. When producers suffer losses, and don't have production insurance, it puts pressure on the province to respond with a direct, ad hoc program. We've seen ad hoc programs cost the province millions of dollars in a single fiscal year.

Production insurance is premium-based, the costs of which are shared by farmers and both the provincial and federal governments, which encourages best practices

and the appropriate sharing of risk. An expanded production insurance program could, if passed, provide similar financial assistance but divide the cost between the federal government, the provincial government and producers in an incremental way over a much longer period of time.

With the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act, both government and farmers would know each year what their costs will be. This will allow for better financial management and a predictable, stable support system for Ontario farmers. Even if we're surprised by a catastrophic event that negatively impacts farmers, our expense to address lost production won't change, and we'll be able to help provide farmers with the appropriate support. Production insurance protects both farmers and the government from unexpected costs.

Farm leaders whom I had the opportunity to meet with extensively over the last number of months have told us that Ontario's Risk Management Program is far superior to any other program in terms of assisting job creation, bankability and predictability for the agri-food sector. We continue to work collaboratively with our partners to make sure that the Risk Management Program is fiscally responsible and predictable to both government and producers.

Canada has a national suite of integrated and complementary business risk management programs in place to help farmers manage risks that are beyond their control each and every day.

We have recognized that production insurance plans need to move beyond just crops to include insurance for other agricultural products. The agricultural sector needs production insurance, not just crop insurance. This change will finally bring Ontario in line with the rest of Canada and fulfill a commitment that we made to farmers under the Growing Forward 2 program. We will continue to work collaboratively with stakeholders to build a national suite of programs that are effectible, predictable and, indeed, bankable.

0910

As my colleague the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane said after the first reading of this bill, expanded production insurance "will mean the difference between paying the bills and losing the farm" for many of our producers in Ontario today. When farmers can't pay their bills, they also can't start growing and creating more good jobs for our province and, as I frequently say, they can't buy those Ford F-150s.

Production insurance is about protection, but it's about other possibilities. Expanding production insurance will be a valuable risk management tool for Ontario farmers. It will be a catalyst for growth in the agri-food sector.

We have a lot of questions to answer and a lot of work ahead of us to develop these plans. But as always, we'll work collaboratively together, and I want to make sure that all members of this House participate in this important debate. I've heard a lot of support from my colleagues here in the Legislature, and I'm indeed very grateful for that.

Ontario's agricultural sector has a huge potential for growth, and the Agriculture Insurance Act will, if passed,

allow for this growth to happen. Giving more producers the opportunity to access production insurance will help them to manage risk better and encourage greater innovation, profitability and job creation in the agri-food sector.

I ask my colleagues to work with me to help my ministry enable growth in this sector by supporting the Agriculture Insurance Act. Growth in the agricultural sector would not only be good for this sector, Mr. Speaker, but good for the entire province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It does give me great pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 40, our government's proposed Agriculture Insurance Act. It gives me special pleasure because it's my first official opportunity to address this House in my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I was so delighted when Premier Wynne asked me to participate in that role, knowing how important the agricultural sector was to her, having kept that role herself when she was first elected as leader of the party. It's an important role, and I'm delighted to have an opportunity to fulfill it.

I know that this act is extremely important to my constituents in Beaches-East York. Many people will ask, "Why would your residents be concerned about crop insurance? It's not like there's fields and fields of corn and hay in Beaches-East York." But the reality is, as I explain to people regularly, that as consumers we are very concerned about how food is grown in Ontario. That is a concern shared in Beaches-East York, and I'm delighted to rise here in this opportunity to speak to the bill today.

Yesterday, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke challenged this government to come forward with acts of consequence and significance that would raise the level of debate in the House. I'm sure he will agree, as all members will, that this is an important bill that deserves all of our support to help rural communities be more profitable moving into the future.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario farmers work diligently to produce goods for the benefit of Ontarians. Ontario farmers hope that the calculated choices they have made, paired with circumstances out of their control, result in favourable production yields and a profitable outcome. Production loss is one of the greatest risks faced by Ontario farmers each and every growing season.

Minister Leal did an excellent job explaining what production insurance is. I believe it will be beneficial for us all to now understand the history of production insurance and business risk management programs in Ontario and our steps in creating a new plan if these proposed amendments are passed. As Minister Leal said, production insurance is not a new concept. It's a program that our province has had experience with for over 50 years.

When our critics ask why it has taken us so long to expand production insurance to these new areas, they may not realize that we have been expanding production insurance to many crops and products for decades. Now we have the opportunity to take the next important step forward, including additional agricultural products in the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act.

Mr. Speaker, before there was a suite of business risk management programs for agriculture, there was production insurance. Crop insurance, as it was then called, laid the foundation for a wide variety of business risk management programs that our provincial and federal governments provide today. Production insurance first became available in Ontario in the 1960s, after the federal Crop Insurance Act was passed in 1959.

Throughout its history, the key principles of production insurance have remained the same. Production insurance is based on participation by the federal and provincial governments and by the producers. It is based on shared program costs. It includes voluntary production, as farmers must choose whether or not to enrol in the program. They can choose the parameters of the plan that make the most sense for their individual business needs. Production insurance is administered by the province, not the federal government, so that decisions are made by the people who best understand the local land and its challenges. Most importantly, production insurance is based on actuarial soundness.

If passed, the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act would allow more types of agricultural products to be eligible for insurance, based on the same key principles. Federal legislation established the national framework for production insurance, but within that framework, there is flexibility that provinces can use to modify the program and meet the needs of their respective farmers.

All provincial insurance plans are developed through consultations with the federal government, provincial government and producers. Each plan is specific to the product or commodity it covers and the risks associated with that product, be it corn, cucumbers, wheat, soybeans or sugar beets. If we are given the opportunity to develop more plans, we will work in close collaboration with farmers and colleagues in the federal government to determine how to best work within the federal framework to support Ontario farmers. When crop insurance first began, there were less than 10 commodities covered, but now production insurance is available to almost 90 commercially grown crops.

Growing Forward 2 is a five-year policy framework for the national agricultural and agri-food sector. It is an investment by federal, provincial and territorial governments, and it is the foundation for government agricultural programs and services. In 2013, the federal and provincial governments jointly developed a protocol under Growing Forward 2 that established criteria for the introduction of potential production insurance plans for livestock. Today, we are taking a very positive step forward making good on that commitment by continuing the evolution of production insurance in Ontario by offering the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act.

In 2003, the federal and provincial governments realized the current system of agricultural business supports in Canada needed to be refined, as programming was not suitable for Canadian farmers. Because of this, a single policy framework was created. From there, the agricultural policy framework was developed as a five-year

agreement. The framework has been very successful and has had its own evolution. The agreement was revised and renewed twice: once in 2008 as Growing Forward and again in 2013 as Growing Forward 2.

In the past and even today, Mr. Speaker, we have been reactionary in our responses to agricultural crises. When a crisis happens, we address it at the time and we provide adequate supports. But there's a better way to handle agricultural crises and producers' need for support. We can be more proactive and not always reactive. We may not be able to predict the events that negatively impact the agricultural sector, but we can be prepared to help if and when they do occur.

How does Ontario's current production insurance measure up to what's available in other provinces and other countries? Within Canada every province except Ontario has the authority to offer production insurance plans for agricultural products beyond crops and perennial plants, so expanding production insurance in Ontario would bring us in line with the rest of the provinces. South of the border, the 2014 US farm bill placed more emphasis on insurance and eliminated direct payments to producers. Expansion would help to level the playing field for our producers so that Ontario's agricultural sector can compete nationally and globally. The proposed amendments will, if enacted, put us on an equal footing with producers across the country and with many of our global competitors.

Now is the time to move forward with these changes and to do so with haste. Mr. Speaker, we know how we got to where we are today. The question that remains is, where do we go next? To develop and implement a new production insurance plan, we have work to do.

0920

Our first step would be at the operational level. We would develop a potential production insurance plan by working with Agricorp. Agricorp, as you know, is one of our crown agencies, which currently offers production insurance to Ontario's farmers on behalf of the federal and provincial governments. We would work with Agricorp and stakeholders to determine the needs of producers for that specific commodity. As with any type of business investment, the cost will be a very important factor to consider.

Production insurance premiums are designed to be affordable. They are cost-shared among the federal and provincial governments and producers. Farmers with all levels of experience, whether they are starting out or have been farming for decades, will have access to these production insurance plans. The majority of producers currently enrolled in production insurance plans are small to mid-sized family farms.

As with the existing production insurance plans, any new plans would likely have to include some type of minimum production levels in order to qualify for assistance. If a new plan were to be developed, we would work with industry to set production levels that make sense for the sector, and for producers and stakeholders in Ontario. Every step of the way, we would collaborate and consult with our stakeholders.

The development of any new plan would consider all segments of the agri-food sector to ensure any potential barriers to entry are identified and addressed. We don't want the cost of insurance to be a barrier of entry to farmers. New production insurance plans won't work or be beneficial if no one can afford them.

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, expanding production insurance is the next step in the evolution of our business risk management programming for Ontario's agricultural sector. It helps farmers grow by giving them affordable, predictable and comprehensive coverage in the event of a disastrous year; it brings our farmers in line with the rest of Canadian farmers; and it allows the government to plan and manage its finances in a very reasonable manner.

I'm particularly delighted that we're bringing forward this plan now. As many of you may have heard before, I've talked about my grandfather Major General Arthur Potts, who was a professor of dairy husbandry at the University of Saskatchewan. Growing up, my grandfather would often talk about the risks associated in livestock moving forward, and I know my grandfather would be delighted that we're moving forward with a piece of legislation such as this.

Expanding production insurance is the right thing to do for Ontario farmers and all consumers, including those in the riding of Beaches–East York.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comments on the minister's opening statement, and as well to the member from the great agricultural riding of Beaches–East York, the parliamentary assistant.

This is a bill, as has been stated earlier, that amends the Crop Insurance Act. As the opposition House leader, I have a lot of meetings with the government. I was shocked yesterday that finally the government has started to think about travelling bills around the province. They have time-allocated every bill they've had, and finally, in a meeting yesterday, the government House leader indicated that he would like Bill 40 to have some travel time in January and February. I certainly support that.

I guess I'm going to ask a question, because that's what we do in these two minutes, questions and comments. I'm going to ask a question, Speaker, through you, to the parliamentary assistant. I hope he answers it.

I would like you to come to Kemptville for some of these hearings on Bill 40. You've allowed a decision to take place by the University of Guelph to close Kemptville campus. You've got thousands and thousands of farmers all across the province who want to grow the agri-food business, who want their sons and daughters to have an agriculture education that's close to home. If you're going to put an ag bill on the table, and if you're really truly committed to hearing from stakeholders, you will travel this bill to communities like Kemptville and you will allow the committee to see the good work that's

being done at that campus, to see what the future of agriculture can be with regional campuses that provide great education and also allow the sons and daughters of our agri-food community to go home to the farm on the weekend after they do their studies so that they can help out.

That's the type of agri-food industry that Progressive Conservatives want, and that's the type of consultation that I think Bill 40 needs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in this House, but today it's a particular honour because talking about agriculture is one of my favourite subjects. I would like to talk on behalf of my caucus on Bill 40 and respond to both the minister and his parliamentary assistant.

I noticed that, in his comments, the parliamentary assistant said he was delighted and he was happy to be moving with haste. Well, this was first agreed to, to increase it to other crops, at a fed-prov meeting in 2003, I believe. This government, or variations of this government, have been in power for 11 years, and it was agreed to at a fed-prov meeting in 2003, and they are now moving with haste. As the minister was speaking, he quoted something I said in response to his ministerial statement. I said to the member from London–Fanshawe: "Is that a good thing if the minister quotes you, or not?"

They're moving with haste, because crop insurance, production insurance, is one of the cornerstones of our system. It has been in place for 50 years. We are behind the eight ball from other provinces. Once again, all the other provinces have this. This government's been in power for 11, 12 years, and they're moving with haste.

In following the House leader from the Tories, I hope that they indeed do travel with this bill because having meetings in Toronto regarding crop insurance—and most of our customers are around Toronto, I would agree with that, but only having meetings in Toronto regarding crop insurance would be utter folly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to speak to this bill and to second the movement of this bill by the member from Beaches–East York.

I am elected from a riding in suburban Toronto, Etobicoke Centre. We saw recently—last year—what the impact can be of extreme weather events in our community. When I was knocking on doors during this campaign, I met countless numbers of folks who were impacted by the floods that impacted us. Actually, it was about a year ago, almost to the day, around Christmastime last year. Some people in my community were covered by insurance, but many weren't. Many thought they were covered, but it turned out that they weren't. So I can appreciate first-hand how important this bill is, and how important this topic is.

Business risk management programs, like production insurance, help producers deal with situations that are

outside of their control, like those floods I talked about, like weather, disease, and extreme market fluctuations, and make timely payments to producers and eliminate the need for costly, ad hoc responses to adverse conditions. By giving producers greater opportunity to access production insurance, we will help them better manage risk and encourage greater innovation, job creation and growth in the agri-food sector.

Our agri-food sector is tremendously important, not just, of course, to those communities that are directly impacted by the jobs that the sector creates, but also to those communities that all of us live in, in all 107 ridings. And Etobicoke Centre is included in that.

I'm incredibly proud to be standing here today. I think this a responsible approach. I think this is a critical topic, not just for our agricultural communities but for all Ontarians, and I hope that we can count on the members opposite to support the bill as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm pleased to stand and provide some information back on the comments on this bill. I look forward to finally extending it over—I think as our member from the north in the third party said, it's been 12 years. I guess that is haste for this government.

It's interesting. Last February, I was at Chrysler when the Premier made the announcement of trying to generate more jobs in the ag sector, and I supported that. I think that's a great idea, because it is a sector that's strong, that needs some help. We're supporting this bill. But then I was shocked a day later, when I was at the farm show in Ottawa, to hear the rumour that they were going to close Kemptville college, one of the two English-language agricultural colleges in this province.

0930

My first thought, after hearing what she said—I said that this can't be true. But of course the next day at a noon, it was confirmed. It's hard to think that this government has any real direction in agriculture. One day they say one thing and the next day their actions speak differently. We see this over and over again.

We're really interested to see if they will travel around and talk to the agricultural community over the next few months. We have the opportunity over January and February, when it's a little slower in the ag industry; the farmers are available, the House is not sitting. We're encouraging them to get around and talk to the community and listen to how important other things in the ag industry are. If she really is genuinely interested in growing that industry, we're going to need well-educated farmers who attend local colleges that allow them to actually work during their college time back in their own communities. They've lost that in eastern Ontario, one of the major hubs, so let's see if they're willing to listen and actually take this around the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Beaches–East York has two minutes.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you very much, members for Leeds–Grenville, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Etobicoke

Centre and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, for your comments on the bill.

I am delighted to hear that we will be travelling this bill out. I look forward to participating in that and hearing from farmers all across the province. I wouldn't presume as to where the committee will be going—we'll leave that up to the committee—but I appreciate their suggestions as to where the committee should go and listen.

I particularly want to address the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. It's fantastic that he has pointed out that it has been 12 years. I'd like to point out, of course, that in those 12 years there was a different member for Beaches–East York. As he notes, the great agricultural riding of Beaches–East York was commented on earlier. Maybe that was the big change in the last 12 years in this government, that there's a different member from the wonderful riding of Beaches–East York. I would celebrate that it has only been a scant six months since I had the pleasure of being elected to this House following the last election and being appointed as the parliamentary assistant to agriculture. Maybe that is the key ingredient as to why we're finally able to move forward with this—as you so rightly point out, it has been time—because the time is right, Mr. Speaker. We want to move forward on this bill.

In honour of my grandfather, a great member of the agricultural community in his own right and after whom I was named—he would be very proud to look down on his grandson saying, “Yes, we're moving forward on livestock plans for production insurance.”

Thank you to the previous member for Beaches–East York who, in his capacity, wasn't able to influence the government the way I have been able to for the great riding of Beaches–East York.

As we know, in Beaches–East York, farmers feed cities, but cities enrich farmers, and there's a very fundamental nexus, a connection between the urban needs from the farming community and the farming community's needs from urban communities. I have been able to make that connection between Beaches–East York and the wonderful agricultural communities which so many of you represent and many of my own colleagues represent.

Interjection: Two more minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I can't say thanks to that.

Further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly welcome the opportunity. Government members and the minister have actually given me lots of time. I thought they would have addressed this in more detail. However, this is a pretty short bill. In fact, all it does is change the name of a title. Let's call it enabling legislation.

We've been discussing this among our PC caucus. It came up several times yesterday, not only production insurance and the need for production insurance to expand to other commodities, but also the need for this government to do something about bee mortality, insurance for bees.

There's no question on expansion of production insurance, in this case changing the name of "crop insurance" to "agricultural insurance." It is long overdue to shove this into other agricultural commodities. There are questions being raised, and the minister acknowledged that. Questions are swirling with regard to the government's announcement to amend the Crop Insurance Act, 1996—I know there were at least two of us in this Legislature who were there in 1996—and to create this new Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

I support the views of my colleagues and the third party that when you bring in agricultural legislation, you do have to talk to farmers. You've got to get out into rural Ontario. We could have hearings in Etobicoke; we could have hearings in the Beaches—or the Beach. When I worked in Toronto, it was called the Beaches. Anyway, let's have hearings in Clinton. Let's have hearings in Kemptville. I've heard Kemptville mentioned several times. Down my way, let's have hearings in Delhi or Cayuga. Let's go up to the Clay Belt and have hearings in that part of Ontario.

There are questions to raise. I raised questions earlier on in my response to the announcement of this legislation. First question: Is there going to be a premium holiday? There are always the early adopters of any agricultural program. How do we encourage those who may not be convinced that this is worth them putting up the premium money, even though it will be supported under the crop insurance model by both the federal and the provincial government? How do we encourage farmers to buy into this new program when it is implemented? I assume it's going to be implemented. All we have now is a piece of legislation that changes the name of the old legislation.

How easy is it going to be for farmers to fill out the forms? Are they going to have to hire a chartered accountant? Of course, the very large farm operations are usually advised to use a chartered accountant anyway, but how easy will it be for farmers to forecast the amount of money that may be coming? That's something their bank will want to know. How easy will it be for farmers to forecast the timing of the payments? Can the payments be processed rapidly to get them into the hands of producers and get them there quickly? Will the calculations for this program be clear? Will they be transparent, easily understandable?

I used to buy crop insurance a number of years ago. I grew corn with my partner—corn, soybeans; winter wheat. I grew alfalfa. I always used crop insurance. The people who looked after us on crop insurance would come over to the house. It was a ritual, a tradition. You'd sit around the kitchen table. Les Van Trigt was my crop insurance agent, and he was just two farms over, actually, from my dad's farm, and four farms over from my farm. We talked about everything except crop insurance during those meetings. I trusted he knew how to work it out. He had my figures.

Crop insurance, by and large, over the years—we've had it for decades—has worked out well, so we can hit

the ground running by expanding this to other agricultural commodities, because we're building on a fairly firm foundation. But bear in mind that when you make a change to a system—it doesn't matter whether it's a corporation, a factory, a government institution—any change that you introduce into a system—I think there's management theory on this—has a ripple effect. It will affect other aspects, other facets, of the broader system. Bringing in production insurance, for example, for cattle may well have an impact on corn growers or the bean guys. It's a concern.

There's going to be additional money required from both the provincial and federal levels. Where does that money come from? We certainly do not want to see a situation where, to accommodate the extra draw from this program, especially if we had a disaster like BSE, or PED in hogs, we are going to be robbing Peter to pay Paul. Oftentimes, Peter has concerns about that, and even Paul, when it gets out of hand. It also raises the issue of, "Wait a minute. This isn't fair. This isn't right." We have to look at the big picture—again, another reason to support hearings.

I've certainly talked to livestock guys, cattlemen and pork producers about this idea. But I've also talked to the cash crop guys. I've talked to people who have the existing program.

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First of all, I'm not saying this will be a threat, but there's only so much money to go around. We know that in the United States, there is a concerted effort from the Obama administration to get a handle on the tremendous cost—a cost in the billions of dollars—of safety net programs in the United States. Two years ago, safety net programs in the United States came in at a cost of \$14 billion. Even in the largest, most robust economy in the world, \$14 billion for farmers is quite a draw. There were weather-related issues there and price issues. Last year, it dropped down to a \$6-billion draw. We as legislators, decision-makers within this government, have to be cognizant of where the money will be coming from.

But there's no question—and we in the PC caucus recognize the value of production insurance. It lends a hand, obviously, for farmers to deal with losses from natural events like weather, pests or disease.

As I mentioned, the production insurance costs are shared by the producers, the provincial government and the federal government. The farmer pays 40%, the provincial government contributes 24%, and the federal government contributes 36%. In my mind—maybe this is a guy thing—it's a fairly easy ratio to remember, 40-24-36. Just visualise that, Speaker. That's how I keep that ratio clear in my mind.

We know that in Ontario, production insurance is currently available for something like 90 commercially grown crops: obviously, the grain and oilseeds—that's corn and soy; winter wheat, tree fruit, grapes, vegetables, forage—members were just talking about forage a minute ago—and the specialty crops. Ginseng has been brought in. Honey, for example, is covered under the crop insurance program.

If we're now going to expand this to other commodities in the livestock area, this is breaking somewhat new ground, as Minister Leal just said in his opening remarks. We didn't get a one-hour speech, but we did get some opening remarks, backed up by the member from the Beaches.

A lot of questions still remain, and I do wish to raise some of these questions, Speaker.

One thing that first came to my mind was on the hog front: What about the big problems we saw a number of years ago with young hog farmers? They took a tremendous hit on the price front. We have ups and downs in the hog business. The young farmers, or the beginning farmers, who didn't have a track record, if you will—I think this was partly a federal problem—very simply, they didn't get the money. They lost the money, but under the structure of that safety net program, they were unable to be reimbursed. I know there are about 100 beginning and young hog farmers who have been very active on this front for years. They've been getting nowhere.

I think of the Bartels brothers down my way. I visited their hog operation. They had switched from dairy, brought in a tremendous amount of capital and built two very large hog barns—these are not inexpensive—to put up a brand new hog operation. Then they got hit with the low prices. They weren't compensated. Retired farmers, hog farmers who had retired a number of years ago—even hog farmers who were deceased—received money through that program. Our young, beginning, very technically savvy farmers were left out in the cold.

We're going to see this program available, ideally, to everybody if they pay the premium and they qualify, but you're not going to see retroactive pay with that particular problem.

Many of us have read the Auditor General's report that came out on Agricornp a number of years ago regarding the overpayments to farmers, in excess of \$24 million. It really is unfortunate when something like that happens. When that money is received, it usually gets spent right away; farmers reinvest back into their plant and equipment. The question is, is this going to prevent those kinds of boondoggles from happening? I will say that I have a lot of respect for Agricornp; they've had an awful lot of new programs dumped on them. They run a good shop, and they have made tremendous improvements, and quite rapidly, with respect to their response to the Auditor General's report.

My first thought was, "Is this going to be a whole farm program?" Again, we have the opportunity now; we're opening up that Crop Insurance Act from 1996. This isn't going to be like AgriStability, and we know AgriStability has just been separated out from business risk management. The focus is on animal producers, and it's obviously using the model of crop insurance.

Will it be margin-based? Again, there are other jurisdictions we can all look at to see how they've developed the programs. Manitoba has developed a similar framework. I went back, with respect to crop insurance—for many of us it's a fairly easy principle to understand. The

hope is that for livestock it will be similar. I think the assumption is that it's going to be similar to crop insurance.

I keep raising this question: Can the farmers do all the paperwork themselves? Do they have to hire an accountant? Let's make this program as straightforward as possible. Obviously, the larger operations have to run their books through an accountant anyway. On many farms, it's beyond the ability of somebody's husband or somebody's wife to be able to do the books with, really, the gigantic growth of some of the farm operations.

As I mentioned, is this going to pull money away from existing programs? Is it new money? My understanding is that this program will be funded by new money so, obviously, new money is coming from the farmers themselves. This is premium-based. The farmer contributes, and this certainly helps with respect to any challenge on the international front, if it's countervailable or what have you. We're in good stead there.

We look to other jurisdictions; we look to the United States. I've asked this question: Do they have livestock insurance down there? Nobody seems to know. I've asked the government side to take a look at this. I know there are some limited livestock programs in the United States for ranchers. My family raised cattle in California and in the high desert in Oregon, where there is no water, basically. In the spring there is, but you have to travel your herd a long way to find water. I know my cousin, every year, moves his herd in a big 70-mile circle. That's kind of going from Port Dover to Stoney Creek and maybe over to Kitchener–Waterloo. That's what he does. He and his son sit on horses looking for water.

California: the last time I was out there, the state caught on fire. It was unbelievable, and it hasn't gotten any better since. So there are US government programs for ranchers for drought, those kinds of disaster programs for livestock. They're federal government programs.

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I would like to talk just a little bit about what we do have in Ontario with respect to crop insurance, or production insurance. About 14,000 farmers in the province—this was, let's see, last year—signed up for crop insurance. That's insurance coverage for five million acres in the province of Ontario. That seems like an awfully large acreage. I know when we were actively farming, we had 600 acres—that's six farms, basically—at the time. Five million acres, that's significant for farmers. For the provincial government and the federal government to come up with a risk management program to cover the perils of the diseases, insects, fungus and nematodes, and weather-related events: hail, flooding, wet weather and that early snowfall that we had quite recently here—that's a lot of acres.

I think it's regrettable that this legislation has been introduced, and here we are debating it already. Meanwhile, the cash crop guys are still out there trying to figure out what to do with their snow beans. I guess I called them "snow beans." That was a Freudian slip. The soybeans, and many of the beans that I've looked at on

my crop tours, especially on the heavier land, seemed to only be about eight or nine inches high. But we had more snow than that on top of them, so they're done.

Corn: Sure, you've got all winter to get the corn off. That's the way we used to take corn off many years ago. But it has a very high moisture content. Some of it is just being chopped up for silage, for livestock feed. That's difficult to do down in the southwest, down Essex and Chatham way. There's not a lot of livestock down that way. So it's a very tough year for farmers right now as we speak.

We're in here in a nice warm building. This is the kind of work that, by and large, as Bob Bailey would say, is inside work and no heavy lifting. Our farmers, our cash crop guys, right now are out there in the mud trying to keep their combines going, trying to unplug their combines. Maybe they're lying on their back trying to pull out the main gear—and I've gone through all of this. We had to do that once: You're covered in mud, and the hydraulic fluid comes down on top of you. That's what they're doing right now. I don't know whether they've had the opportunity yet to really do much thinking about this new livestock insurance program and how that might affect those who are in the cash crop business or in the fruit and vegetable business. Many farms are trying to finish up before Christmas, and have an awful lot on their minds. Then of course, they will spend the Christmas holidays dealing with all the paperwork and the red tape and gearing up for income tax time.

So we do have a program. We've got a model to follow. It covers five million acres.

South of the border, they have a program. They have safety net programs. To give you perspective on Ontario agriculture compared to what's going on down in Ohio and Illinois and North Carolina and California: US crop insurance covers 295 million acres. We cover five million. Two years ago, the US safety net programs' costs came in to the taxpayer at \$14 billion. We have to set up our programs to ensure that we remain competitive.

When I would sell corn or soybeans—in the early 1980s, I was selling soybeans for about what farmers are selling them for right now. My price was determined by the Chicago Board of Trade. It's the same market. It moves back and forth across the border.

Here's a government that's talking about banning neonics on 80% of the acreage in the province of Ontario. They use neonics to grow corn in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa, in those big cash crop states; the same with soybeans. We import corn and soybeans from the United States. We will continue to import corn and soybeans from the United States that are grown using neonics. We have to square that; we've got to deal with that. We can ban neonics on 80% of the acreage in Ontario, but does it make sense to bring in corn from our competitors who use neonics to grow it? How does that help the bees in Iowa? How does that help the bees in Illinois?

We do know that farmers, certainly hog farmers, have had their concerns, and they've long asked that production insurance—the plans—move beyond just crops and

include insurance for other agricultural products. The agricultural sector does need production insurance, not just crop insurance. As we know—and the members opposite have had 11 years to deal with this—Ontario is the only province so far that does not have legislation enabling this to happen.

I mentioned Agricorp. Production insurance is delivered by a crown agency in the province of Ontario. It's called Agricorp. It was set up by the Mike Harris government back in 1996, and it's backed by the crop insurance fund. The value of the fund fluctuates from year to year, obviously, depending on crop damage and the value of claims coming in. It depends also on the premiums coming in from farmers themselves.

I'll mention that crop insurance in the United States is administered and implemented, or dispensed, through private insurance companies. I think there are about 11 very large private insurance companies that do the legwork with respect to the to-and-fro of crop insurance down there.

Like any large insurance program, Agricorp purchases reinsurance, private reinsurance. You need reinsurance, and anybody who has been involved in the insurance business would know that. I sat on the board of an insurance company for a number of years. It's a risk management tool. Insurance is risk management. Reinsurance is risk management for the insurance companies themselves or, in this case, the government—in this case, Agricorp. We have to protect the province. We have to protect the taxpayer from undue financial exposure.

Existing production insurance is triggered when a producer's actual production falls below their guaranteed production. We trust that this legislation will provide an adequate response if and when we have a real disaster.

BSE never did get into humans in North America, to my knowledge. I don't think it was over here; it was out west. We paid the price. I've lost half my cattlemen; I've lost half the cattle herd in Haldimand county over the last 10 years. In the province of Ontario, we've lost half our herd. The number of head has been cut in half. If something like that came through—we've all been discussing the recent statistics on bee mortality. Our pork industry and the PED virus—cold weather is upon us. That could trigger yet another onslaught of PED on our hog farms. We know that, to date, we've lost 30% of Ontario's pork-producing capacity because of PED.

We know that Ontario Pork, their organization, has stressed the need for the province to come up with some mortality insurance, or to at least look at their request. We now have this enabling legislation. It's not going to help those hog farmers, those young guys, those beginning farmers who got nailed back in 2007, but the hog industry, I would feel, would buy into this.

1000

It has to make a good business case to make it worth their while, of course, and they're going to want to see transparency; I think the minister made mention of the importance of stability in the program; and obviously bankability—the bank wants to know whether you've got

insurance coverage or not before they hand over the money. And all concerned need predictability as far as, when does the money come back and how much will it be. Again—and I'll repeat—we can't draw money from other farm programs to fund this one, and I feel I've been assured by the government this isn't going to happen.

If we follow that crop insurance model—we've been doing it for years and years. As I mentioned, Agricorp was established in January 1997 under the Ministry of Agriculture, and it covers a constellation of programs. I think perhaps we have asked Agricorp to take on too much in a hurry on occasion with so many of these ad hoc programs and business risk management. Certainly on this side of the Legislature, we all fought for that. I've said before that I attended just about every tractor rally across the province of Ontario during those winters that we were trying to get that one through.

We know that in 2008, Auditor General Jim McCarter concluded that Agricorp was having difficulty adapting to these rapid changes that were being imposed on them with the substantial growth in the number of farm support programs. There was a doubling of the annual support payments to farmers during that time. This challenged Agricorp's ability to deliver farm support programs in an efficient way, let alone an effective way, and in a transparent way.

So here we are; we've got enabling legislation. So far, all it does is change the title of the bill. As the minister admitted, Ontario is the only province without the legislative authority to offer production insurance for a wide variety of agricultural products. During the BSE time, this government had to come up with ad hoc money—that's not based on farmer premiums, by the way; that comes directly from the taxpayer—and they had to do it in a hurry, or we could have really lost—who knows? The whole industry could have collapsed. This came from the federal government as well, so that cost taxpayers something like \$130 million. This is a model where the risk, if you will, was shared by the farmer himself through premiums, again going back to that ratio, 40-24-36.

Ad hoc programs are not the best way to do it. You try to wrap them up as soon as you can—the plum pox virus program, for example. We need a better model, and we do have to work with farmers in the commodity organizations to make sure we do get this one right.

The new plan needs that kind of predictability. Farmers need to be able to forecast the amount of payments, the timing of the payments. In the event of another crisis like BSE, they'd have to know how much money is coming and the timing. They are keeping their creditors at bay, they are dealing with their banks, and we can do an awful lot through a good program to lift that load off the producers' back.

I sincerely hope this program doesn't morph into another gigantic red tape exercise. Farmers already face enough red tape as it is, forms to fill out, it's to dot and t's to cross. The calculations have got to be clear; they've got to be transparent. Participants need to get a detailed yet easy-to-understand statement.

The question remains: What commodities are going to be covered? We assume beef, cattle; we assume hogs; we assume honey bees. I just listened to the Minister of Agriculture, I listened to the parliamentary assistant present this, and there was no mention of bees. There is a need for bee insurance. Mortality insurance for bees—that's something the government can do. I don't hear any direct practical ideas; I certainly didn't hear it this morning, coming across, with respect to assisting bees.

What about racehorses? Will a program like this cover the horse racing industry? They had the carpet pulled out from under them, under this present government, ending the Slots at Racetracks Program, again, to pay for runaway spending on the part of this government. Horse farms have gone bankrupt. I've seen the for sale signs up and down in my riding. Horses have been euthanized. I don't know how many horses have been killed, the young ones hit in the head when they're born because they just can't afford to look after them over the years. Is this going to cover horses?

I was quite intrigued: The parliamentary assistant mentioned his grandfather's involvement. I think you mentioned the University of Guelph. I spent five years at Guelph; I finally graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College—I explain to people in my riding that I spent five years at Guelph because I was a slow learner, but I did get a master of science degree.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: People probably didn't hear that interjection.

The parliamentary assistant made mention of his grandfather. In spite of the tremendous growth in this particular city, for example, our roots are in agriculture. I attended the Ontario Agricultural College; my father attended the Ontario Agricultural College with a degree in animal husbandry. My father used to teach a bee-keeping course, actually, at one time. My grandfather attended the Ontario Agricultural College. He took the famous short courses, back in the day—that could be part of a resolution for this Kemptville crisis. My great-grandfather attended not the Ontario Agricultural College but the Ontario Veterinary College, OVC. We still have his black veterinarian's bag. I just use my family as an example.

We can get it right in the province of Ontario, because we have this tremendous background in agriculture in this part of the world—not just in my riding, down on the sand plain and the Haldimand clay, but we're blessed with the soil types, the climates, the microclimates, the know-how, the knowledge of mechanics and agronomy and the knowledge of how to deal with farm labour and machinery, not only turning a wrench on a combine, but knowing how to deal with a GPS system on the combine as well.

My time may be drawing a to a close. I wish I had more time. I guess I'll get to speak after we break. But I do want to talk a little about bees. I want to talk specifically, in the context of this legislation, about bee mortality insurance. That's something the government can do.

There's been lots of talk about bees, and it's been all talk. We have government for a reason. You have power, as other provinces have done, to bring in a bee insurance program. On our side of the House—I can't divulge what we talk about in caucus, but this came up on two different agenda items yesterday during our caucus meeting. We are very concerned about bee mortality. We in caucus have proposals. If I have time, I will walk through some of these proposals right now to help our beekeepers.

1010

I have a personal interest. On our farms, we've had bees for 38 years. Fraser McClung in, I guess it was 1976—I took over one of my grandfather's farms. He brought his supers in. This guy knew bees. He just recently passed away. That spring, the first thing we did was we went out and planted pussy willows all over that part of the farm. Pussy willows, as you know, come up very early in the spring. His bees came out and they needed food. He didn't put sugar through his hives. He was a naturalist. He was a fantastic guy.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Do they need acidic soil?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, this was on clay. Oh, pussy willows? These pussy willows did very well. These pussy willows are now 38 years old. I've had to cut some of them down. You just stick the shoot in the ground. It's like planting willow. They come up in the spring, as we know. One of the first things you see are the pussy willows. Bees like that.

We have a lot of black locusts on my farm. That's why he moved his hives to my farm. This is bee management. It wasn't monoculture. We have a lot of gully land. At that time, we had taken 200 acres out of production to plant trees, but the trees weren't up yet, so there was lots of goldenrod, lots of weeds. Bees love that kind of stuff. We probably need more weeds in the city to attract bees.

There's something every one of us can do—something people can do in Etobicoke and the Beaches: Let your front lawn go into weeds and get the bees in there.

If you want to do something about bees, let's do something practical. In the context of this legislation, let's do something practical to help our beekeepers.

We are aware that other provinces have bee mortality and overwintering insurance. Alberta has a program. Manitoba has a program. Saskatchewan is working on a program.

If I have time, I'll just mention the Manitoba program. They've recently, as in Ontario, experienced higher than normal mortality rates in the colonies that are kept over the winter. Manitoba had a tough winter. Many losses have been caused by unmanageable and natural perils, obviously weather-related losses—has anybody else here been in Winnipeg in the winter? It gets cold up there—and diseases with no means of adequate control. To assist with the financial burden of these uncontrollable losses, the Overwinter Bee Mortality Insurance program insures producers' bee colonies against unmanageable, abnormal overwinter losses. Think of last winter here in Ontario. Beekeepers have the option to insure their colonies at

high- or low-dollar coverage levels, and they're paid an indemnity—"indemnity" is an insurance term for compensation—to overwinter if the overwinter losses exceed the coverage deductible and the premium costs for this program. Again, here's this 40-24-36 ratio. They're shared 40% by the insured beekeeper, 24% by the province of Manitoba and 36% by the government of Canada. I have a lot of details on this Manitoba program.

Alberta has a similar program to Manitoba. They're looking after their beekeepers through an insurance program.

Here we are debating changes to the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996. We in the PC caucus ask this government to implement the Manitoba program or take a look at it. Take a look at the Alberta program.

If you're hesitant, take a look at Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is doing a pilot project. Saskatchewan is setting up a somewhat similar program. It's a three-year pilot to help their beekeepers. This is government helping beekeepers who are suffering very high mortality rates. The Saskatchewan program seems to be modelled on the Manitoba and Alberta programs.

So here's an opportunity for the province of Ontario to hit the ground running. We had tremendous losses—like I say, we've had bees on our farm for 38 years. Down in the Norfolk area—tremendous bee mortality back in 2007. There were no neonics then. I think it was crop-related. At my constit office, I got to know all the large beekeepers in my area.

I've just received word from our Speaker to wrap this up.

I will say that we in the caucus have had a lot of discussions about this production insurance program, and we think it can be made to work. The farmers seem confident that we, as legislators, and of course staff and Agricorp can come up with a good program. I just leave this with you—we've been discussing the bee issue over and over again, going back for the last 14 months—bring in a bee insurance program. It's a practical thing government can do for bee mortality.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just before I break, I'd like to thank the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for his extensive knowledge in agriculture. I found the bee discussion very interesting. Thanks so much, and it's great to have that kind of knowledge in the House.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today our page captain is Noah Westwater. I'd like all members of the House to say hello to his family. His mother, Susan Westwater; his father, Bruce Westwater; his sister, Brooke Westwater; and his grandmother, Carol Kirkwood, have all joined us here this morning. Please welcome them.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Principals' Council who are here today at Queen's Park, as well as the members of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. There are a number of those members who are coming in the door right now. I wish that everybody would give a warm welcome to all of them.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome members from the Action, Research and Change Group to End Violence Against Women. We have with us Kathy Campbell, Leighann Burns, Paula Valois, Lee-Ann Lee, Michelle Moody, Eileen Morrow, and an anonymous survivor who has joined us here at Queen's Park. I want to thank them for all their hard work. Thank you very much. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I too would like to welcome the members of the Ontario Principals' Council, particularly John Hamilton—where did he go? I don't think he's here yet—the current president, a whole bunch of past presidents, and Ian McFarlane, who's the executive director, who's also lost in transit but I'm sure will appear. Welcome, all of you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to welcome to the House Rebecca Little, who represents the University of Waterloo Federation of Students. Prior to going to school, she hailed from Huron—Bruce.

Ms. Daïene Vernière: It's a pleasure to introduce fourth-year University of Waterloo student Stéphane Hamade. He is here representing the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Welcome to all of you who are here today.

Mr. Yvan Baker: There are a few folks I would like to introduce today. I'm honoured to have in the Legislature with us my father, Donald Baker. I wouldn't be here without him, Speaker, in more ways than one.

I would also like to thank our page captain, Maja Toman, and her mother and father, who are here: her mother, Aleksandra Glisic, and her father, Tibor Toman. Please welcome them.

I would also like to second the Minister of Education's welcome. We had a number of folks from the Ontario Principals' Council visit my office this morning: John Hamilton, the president; Jeff McKibbin; and Ian McFarlane. We'd like to welcome them as well.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome a number of representatives from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. With us this morning we have Sean Madden, Jasmine Irwin, Matt Hefland, Jen Carter, Roland Erman and Zachary Rose.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Dr. Eric Marsden from the Marsden Centre of Naturopathic Excellence. He bought, at a silent auction, the right to come here. I didn't mention that it was free anyway, but thank you and welcome, Dr. Marsden.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome—they'll be in just a moment—a number of students from the University of Western Ontario PC campus association—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I knew that would excite the Liberals over there, Mr. Speaker—Ron Bertolo, Pamela Bialik, Marisa Breeze, Andrew Esser, Sophia Helpard,

Piercon Knezic, Mattheu Kok, Patrick Mair, Kayla Tiller, Landon Tulk, Alex van der Wal, Gregory Wilford, Jesse Wray and Richard Sookraj. I'd like to welcome those students as they come in the building.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I am pleased to welcome the members of ARC—Action, Research and Change to End Violence Against Women—including some survivors, advocates and activists who are working for change. Some of the participants joining us today are Leighann Burns, Lee-Ann Lee, Paula Valois, Eileen Morrow, Kathy Campbell, Michelle Moody and other survivors. They are here for the release of their report on the implementation of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'd also like to welcome my cousin Richard Sookraj, who is here with the University of Western Ontario Conservatives. I don't hold that against him.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to welcome to Queen's Park a good friend of mine, Jim Karahalios. Jim and his family ran a fish-and-chips shop in Toronto for almost 50 years. I'd like to welcome him to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to welcome the members of the Automotive Industries Association of Canada. Today we have with us Marc Brazeau, the president; France Daviault, senior director; Jason Kerr, director; and members Diane Freeman, John Cochrane, Tony Canade, and Tony Del Vasto. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today, in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Jeong-sik Kang, the consul general of the Republic of Korea, who is accompanied by Deputy Consul General Sang Soo Lee and Consul Byungjun Kim. Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: This morning my question is to the Premier. Premier, during his fall fiscal update, your Minister of Finance revealed that his revenue projections from just four months earlier were short by more than half a billion dollars. Your finance minister then tried to reassure Ontario taxpayers that he had the discipline to eliminate the deficit over the next three years. Then on November 18, we saw his real plan revealed when he refused to rule out once again raising taxes.

Premier, can you commit here this morning that your government will not be raising taxes yet again over the next three years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The plan that we are implementing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to start right off. If anyone interjects, I'm going to stop them.

Please carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The plan that we are implementing is a balanced one and it has been laid out clearly. It was laid out in the budget when we introduced it in May, it was laid out in our platform and it was laid out in the budget that we brought back to the Legislature after the election. It's very clear that we are limiting our spending, but at the same time we are investing in Ontario. We have committed to balancing and eliminating the deficit by 2017-18. We're on path to do that. We have overachieved on our targets.

The reality is that there is a revenue challenge that we're facing, but that makes it all the more important that we make those investments so that we can see that economic growth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Your Minister of Finance's fall fiscal update clearly stated that, should revenues fall further, he would look at other tools to balance the budget. Later, when asked by reporters five separate times if he would increase taxes, he avoided answering the questions entirely.

A responsible government should have a plan to balance a budget by living within its means. Your government appears determined to go ahead and raise taxes on hard-working Ontario families one more time.

Premier, is your finance minister committed to balancing the budget without raising taxes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, our plan has been quite clearly laid out in the budget. We are implementing that. For five years in a row, Ontario has exceeded its deficit targets. It's one of the only governments in Canada to have achieved this level of success. By exceeding our targets, our accumulated deficit is \$25 billion lower than it would otherwise have been.

Let me talk about some of the other tools:

—cracking down on the underground economy, and that includes contraband tobacco;

—managing compensation costs, and we know that the President of the Treasury Board is actively engaged in that;

—making sure that businesses are paying their taxes, making sure that we're getting all of that revenue; and

—correcting the vertical imbalance with the federal government. It's very important that we work with the federal government to make sure that Ontario is getting its fair share.

1040

We are working to maximize the value of our assets—that's the work that Ed Clark and his commission have done—and we're doing a program review across government. Those are the tools that we're using.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Well, Premier, we have seen this act by your government before: promising a plan to balance the budget when no such plan actually exists, shifting the blame for the incompetent handling of

Ontario's fiscal situation onto everyone but those responsible, and then capping the irresponsible behaviour off with a tax increase on hard-working Ontario families.

When your Minister of Finance was asked if he would commit to avoiding further tax increases, he dodged the question altogether. Premier, again I ask you: Will you commit to a plan to balance the books without raising a single tax?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, our plan has been laid out very clearly, and the member opposite has chosen to ignore the answer. I just went through six initiatives that we are taking. One of them does talk about the federal government and the relationship with the federal government, but there are five others that are tools we are using to work our way to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18.

I have answered the question in terms of the path that we have laid out. That is the path that we are on. Those are the initiatives that we are taking. That is the way we will get to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18.

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My second set of questions this morning is to the finance minister. Minister, on numerous occasions, you've been asked to clarify your plans to utilize what you have called "new revenue tools" in order to meet your campaign pledge to balance the budget within three years. Just this morning I asked the Premier three straightforward questions on the same subject, which she obviously refused to answer, so let's distill this down to something even more basic.

Minister, you recently refused to rule out raising taxes to fix your government's failing financial position. Can you answer this simple question: Will you commit that you will not raise the HST before the next election?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Oh, Mr. Speaker, this is great. The man who wants to be the leader of the party is looking at trying to show vision before the public and the people of Ontario. He is now trying to make things up as he goes.

We put forward a budget. We put forward a fall economic update. We've laid out very clearly what it is that we need to achieve by building a path to balance that talks about the integrity of our revenue, ensuring fairness in our tax system, making certain the underground economy is addressed and looking at the leakage in our system. At the same time, we're looking at maximizing our assets to increase our dividends, we're continuing to do our savings, finding ways to improve our overall expenses—which, by the way, has made Ontario the lowest-cost government in Canada because of the measures that we've taken. We're going to continue doing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Hard-working taxpayers of Ontario already pay their fair share of taxes. You owe it to them and everybody in the province to be crystal clear.

Minister, will you today rule out raising personal income taxes on Ontario workers between now and the next election?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, the member who's asking the question—when he was the labour critic, his only plan was to fire 100,000 people. That is not what we're doing. We're trying to ensure that we support the system and invest—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North will come to order.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member talks about right-to-work legislation and forcing people into lower—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing, please. If it happens again, you'll be warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member opposite talks about right-to-work legislation, putting people in vulnerable positions in the lowest wages that are possible, we're trying to find ways not only to control expenses by making our path to balance effective, but we're also being fair by ensuring that we stimulate economic growth. That's why we're investing in people and their skills. That's why we're investing in modern infrastructure, creating over 100,000 jobs last year. And we are controlling—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Minister, as you know, my background is in small business. Small businesses employ the majority of workers in this province. Indeed, small and medium-sized businesses are the cornerstone of our local communities. They are also the backbone of Ontario's economy.

Minister, will you today rule out raising taxes on small businesses between now and the next election?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, we have been supporting small business. In fact, it was that party that delayed the implementation of the elimination of the employee health tax for 90% of all businesses in Ontario. We have just passed the Better Business Climate Act that will reduce red tape. In fact, the CFIB has applauded the step that we're taking in the right direction to support small business.

As I was saying just a moment ago, we have maintained the lowest and most dynamic taxes in North America.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You haven't passed Bill 7 yet. You'd better get your notes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order, second time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You'd better get new briefing notes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Because of our attractive, dynamic tax system we have now become the top destination for foreign direct investment. More start-ups are

happening in Ontario than anywhere else in Canada combined. We will continue to support businesses, we'll continue to do what's necessary to provide that integrity, and we'll continue to do so even though the members opposite have actually voted against those measures.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Affordable child care spaces in Ontario are closing and the response of the Liberal minister was, "I'm not really quite sure what the problem is." Health care is being cut and people are feeling it, and the response of the Liberal minister was, "We are not making cuts." People on social assistance have been left without support that they rely on and the response of the Liberal minister was that this is making "a mountain out of a very small molehill."

The Liberals are looking more and more arrogant and out of touch by the day. Will the Premier acknowledge that people are being hurt by her budget and her ministers' incompetence and insensitivity?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Obviously, I reject the premise of the question. What I will say is that I acknowledge that there are people in Ontario who are struggling; there are people in Ontario who are looking for child care. I understand that. That's why it's very important to me that the legislation that moves through this House is going to make child care safer and has the potential to create 6,000 new child care spaces.

I know that there are people in this province who are looking for care for their loved ones. That's why we continue to increase the support for community care; we continue to increase the budget for community care so that people will get the health care that they need when they need it.

I know there were families who suffered because they didn't get their cheques as quickly as they should have. That's why the minister is working very hard to rectify that situation. That's what I will acknowledge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals actually don't seem to get it. Health care cuts are real, child care spaces have been closed in this province under their watch and the Liberal social assistance software rollout has been a Gong Show. These have had real impacts on the people of this province. Does the Premier get that people and families are suffering under her watch?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that there is a complexity in making sure that 13.5 million people have the services they need. I understand that there are thousands of children in this province who have access to full-day kindergarten because of the policies we put in place. Some 470,000 children have benefited from full-day kindergarten as of this year. What I know is that that has helped families. That has helped families in every riding across this province.

Are there still people who are looking for the right child care arrangement for their children? Absolutely.

We're going to continue to work, including with the legislation that was just passed that will create 6,000 new safe child care spaces.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's an old saying that you're entitled to your own opinion, but you're not entitled to your own facts. Health care services have been cut even though the Minister of Health denies it. Whether it's cuts to home care in Windsor, fewer nurses or reducing access to operating rooms by half in local community hospitals, these are cuts—full stop.

Is the Premier going to continue to stand in this House and deny that health care services are being cut in Ontario?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, I am, because that's not the reality. The reality is that we continue to invest more money in health care, we continue to invest more money in the reduction of wait times for people across the system and we continue to invest more money in community care.

Is it complex to run a health care system for 13.5 million people? It absolutely is, Mr. Speaker. Is it necessary that we make changes so that we can transform that system so that it will be the best that it can be for the long term? Absolutely. So we're going through a transformation, and if we were not to do that, then we would not be responsible.

It is easy for the leader of the third party to stand up and pick on a particular issue in a particular community. We have to rectify those, but our responsibility is also to deal with the whole system and make sure that it is functioning at the highest level.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier: When Coronation Park Day Nursery in Sarnia shut its doors because of Liberal cuts, the minister said she didn't understand the problem. Well, I went there. The problem is simple: There are no children at Coronation Park Day Nursery anymore.

The minister doesn't seem to get what this means to families in Sarnia. Does the Premier understand, if her minister doesn't—does the Premier at least understand why cutting child care spaces is a problem for families in Sarnia?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the specifics of that particular situation. I know that the Minister of Education will want to comment. But let me just say this: As we have introduced full-day kindergarten, there is no doubt, I say to the member opposite, that there is a transition that is happening in the child care system. We understand that. Four- and five-year-olds who would have been in child care are now in full-day kindergarten—I might add, saving those families thousands of dollars a year so that they can have those kids in full-day kindergarten.

What that means is, in the child care system there is a transition so that children who have been on the waiting list who will be younger—they are now finding their way into the child care system. That is a change. It is a transformation. But, Mr. Speaker, it is a very good thing that 470,000 children have had full-day kindergarten—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When a family relies on social assistance and the money never shows up, that's a major problem. But not only did the minister insist that the problem was "a very small molehill," she refused to even apologize. Why won't the Premier acknowledge that in addition to fixing this problem, Ontarians deserve an apology?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the minister did apologize to the families who were affected by this. I'm very sorry, and I say it to the families who were affected by this. But the reality is, the system that is being put in place is a better system than was there before. The system will allow more time for caseworkers to work with families, and that's a very good thing, because that relationship is extremely important.

The minister has been in touch with municipalities. She is working to make sure that wherever there was an impact on a family, that is being rectified.

I go once again to the responsibility of government, and that is to make the changes that are responsible and will improve service to people over the long term.

This is about a very large system, Mr. Speaker: 500,000 cheques a month that go out. We'd better make sure we have got a system that works for people in the long term.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what this is about is services that are being cut and people who are feeling it. That's what this is about. But an arrogant, out-of-touch Liberal government seems to believe that they just need to deny, deny, deny and somehow that's going to stop being true. Can the Premier tell us why her arrogant Liberal government is denying what everyone else can see as a plain fact?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that when a question is written down and the supplementaries are written down, you read the question and then the supplementaries. But the fact is, I have not denied that there are people who are struggling. I have not denied that there are impacts that come about because of the changes that we are making. What I do deny is that we are cutting services for the sake of cutting services. That is not the reality.

We are going through, whether it's in the implementation of a new technology for making sure that people on social assistance have more time with their caseworkers; whether it's the implementation of full-day kindergarten, which does have an impact on child care; or whether it's making sure that people have the health care that they need where they need it, when they need it:

Those are system changes. They are necessary for the long-term well-being of the 13.5 million people in Ontario. I don't deny that that change is necessary. What I'm saying is that we must make the changes, and that's what we're doing.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, in estimates committee, your office testified that the new SAMS system—software built by a company called Cúram and now owned by IBM—is “a modern, commercial, off-the-shelf application.” When questioned about Cúram’s serious software flaws experienced by legislators in Minnesota and Maryland, your assistant deputy minister, Martin Thumm, testified that it failed in those states because “they didn’t do the testing they needed to do before they implemented....”

Minister, for you, there was no rush to implement. In fact, you had four years to test the system and get it right. You extended the rollout deadline twice because of glitches and you still didn’t stop until you rolled it out. You just steamrolled through, Minister. You now wear this failure. You had all the time in the world. You wear it. What’s your excuse, Minister?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for the question. I think we need to go back to understand why, in fact, we implemented SAMS in the first place. You will perhaps recall that we had a very outdated system. It was one that was brought in under the former PC government in 2002.

In 2009, the Auditor General put together a report on ODSP and Ontario Works and raised a number of issues with respect to the old system—SDMT. There were security and access control issues. There was a lack of user satisfaction on the part of the front-line workers, and there were long-standing system errors.

Our government recognized the system was outdated and no longer tenable. That is why we decided on this investment in a new system that will better support staff that deliver social assistance and, ultimately, will better serve the people who rely on our programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The old system at least made sure that those cheques arrived on time and our most needy didn’t suffer, Minister.

Your government is averse to doing proper research. You failed to do it on MaRS, you failed to do it on Ornge, and you certainly failed to do it on eHealth. It’s evident you also failed to do your research on this new computer system. You had four years and multiple warnings from Minnesota, Maryland, OPSEU, your front-line staff and our PC members in estimates committee. Yet here you are left with a \$20-million mess that is a combination of overpayments, missed and delayed payments. People are going without, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, though the party opposite may feel it’s acceptable to allow the needs of Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens to go unaddressed, we in the PC Party do not. The Premier said sorry. If she’s really sorry, Minister, what you will do—and we’re asking you the same question I asked yesterday: Will you bring those people from the front line back to estimates so we can get to the bottom of this and those people who are the most needy don’t suffer because of your carelessness again?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Let’s just get one thing straight. Our government has as its number one concern help and assistance for those most vulnerable members in society, at the core of the values that our party stands for, and it’s truly ironic to hear the member opposite who—under their government, there was a cut of some 22% of social assistance rates.

We remain committed to working closely with our front-line staff. We will implement SAMS and we will continue to provide support to our clients. Our focus in the near future relies on us all working together. This is caseworkers on the front-line and the support staff that is there to assist them, whether they be in municipal settings or in ODSP offices. We have confidence that SAMS will be a better solution for both the caseworkers and the people we serve.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. On Monday, the minister told this House that the government has a contract with IBM to “assist us” with “the transition of going live with SAMS.” Will the Premier release that contract today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Yes, indeed, the government, through proper channels, obviously, engaged a vendor of record to implement this particular system. It is something that we’ve been working on and with the vendor Cúram, now owned by IBM, for the last three and half years. Clearly, technical support is provided and is continuing to be provided through this particular transition. We’re working closely with our partners in the field to ensure that they get the kind of support they need, pursuant to our agreement with them and through the provision of these services.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: According to the reports, the government has found 65 defects in the SAMS program, which have led to the massive problems with social assistance money reaching the most vulnerable Ontarians. Apparently we have a contract to deal with these problems.

When the state of Minnesota had problems, IBM sent at least 80 technical workers to fix the problems. Have any IBM workers been dispatched to solve these problems, and how much are we paying them to actually fix the defects in their own software?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We continue to work with a very active technical support team available to municipalities. In my conversations with the mayors of such cities as Hamilton, Sudbury, Ottawa and Windsor, I've made it very clear that this kind of support is available to them. We've actually set up some dedicated hotlines wherever a payment issue is identified so that these issues are prioritized.

I would like to mention, though, at this point that we still are finding it very difficult to validate some of the anecdotes that we're hearing and have been printed in the media. The issue that we found with the contract related to the overpayment issue, as we've stated, has been corrected by the technical team.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. The Ontario forestry industry is a critical part of our economy; in fact, the forestry industry employs over 160,000 Ontarians in about 260 communities across this great province. Although most Ontarians believe the forestry industry is only in northern Ontario, it may surprise you that I have a mill in my own riding of Northumberland-Quinte West. However, the best part about this industry is the sustainability of the resources, with approximately 25.6 million hectares of forest certified as sustainable—more than twice the size of the state of Ohio.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What are you doing to ensure that the government of Ontario has a growing forestry sector?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. It's my understanding that it is sweet Lou Rinaldi's birthday today, so I want to wish the member a happy birthday.

He is right when he suggests that the sector has gone through some very challenging times, not just here in Ontario but right across the country: Ontario, BC and Quebec, as the major forestry-producing jurisdictions in the country.

Our government stepped up to the plate. We've invested over \$1.3 billion in forestry since 2005, including about \$570 million for a roads program, a program that I would say was downloaded onto the backs of the forestry companies by the NDP when they had their turn in government, and also including \$130 million in stumpage relief and \$170 million in electricity relief. A \$22.5-million grant to Resolute Forest Products for their mill in Fort Frances is one of the investments that we made on the capital side.

When the industry faced challenges related to global competition, a rising Canadian dollar, a global recession and a decline in the US housing market, we invested, and we're now seeing them coming through and increasing their—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for his response and leadership on this important issue.

My constituents have been listening to the accusations from the third party over the past few weeks regarding a mill in Fort Frances, a mill that's very important to the town, like many mills in small towns across Ontario.

Though a private company owns the mill, I know how critical it is that this mill be heated through the winter to ensure that it remains a viable asset in case a buyer comes forward. Could the minister report to the House what he has done to ensure that this mill remains heated throughout the winter months?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, I thank the member for the question. It is accurate that over the course of the last several weeks, our office and our ministry have spent a great deal of time trying to work forward on a plan and a program with the owner of the mill, a privately owned asset, to see that that asset could be preserved should a new potential buyer step forward to purchase the asset.

We did not come to a successful conclusion on a deal with Resolute, so there's no formal deal between our government and the owner of the mill. But we have publicly heard that the owner of the mill, Resolute Forest Products, has indicated that they will heat the asset in what they're calling "asset protection mode."

I had a long conversation with Mayor Avis of Fort Frances. I indicated very clearly to him the language that Resolute is using in terms of what they will do in the asset. We're hopeful that that means it will be maintained in a state that, in that asset protection mode, should a potential buyer come forward, would reflect an asset that somebody would still be interested in buying.

ONTARIO PLACE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Minister, you've been mandated by the Premier to be the most open and transparent government in the country, yet 14 agencies under your watch have not tabled their annual reports in the House.

The Ontario Place Corp., which falls under your watch, has not tabled an annual report since 2010. Minister, why has it taken three years, and still no annual reports for Ontario Place have been tabled in this House?

Hon. Michael Coteau: We are committed to responsible fiscal management, and accountability and transparency in our government. That's why the annual reports and expenses for ministry agencies are available publicly. There's a process in place for these reports before they're made public: They must be submitted by the ministry, they must be approved by the minister, approved by cabinet and tabled within the Legislature.

My ministry has received the 2012-13 annual reports from all of its agencies. These reports are still in the approval process and will be available for the public once they're tabled in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: In the case of Ontario Place, the financial reports are now listed online in public accounts for 2011 and 2012, just to update you, but the ministry has sat on those reports for almost a year. In them, the Auditor General notes concerns of pending legal action relating to the closure of Ontario Place. In fact, last year, an additional \$4 million was spent on unforeseen closing costs, according to your former deputy minister.

Minister, what are you trying to hide, and when will the annual reports for 2011, 2012 and 2013 with respect to Ontario Place be tabled in this Legislature?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I have personally signed the 2011-12 annual report for Ontario Place, and I expect them to be tabled within the Legislature very shortly.

We're excited about Ontario Place. Ontario Place was built in the 1970s. It is a great facility that we've invested time and energy into. We plan to bring that public asset back to the public so they can access it the same way I was able to access it with my family when I was a young guy.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Two weeks ago we were told that Ontario had joined with Quebec to set seven conditions for approval of the Energy East pipeline. But last week, the Premier called Alberta Premier Jim Prentice and reassured him that Ontario had not set any conditions at all.

The seven "principles," as the Premier describes them, are more like suggestions. They are weaker and narrower than Quebec's seven conditions. In particular, Quebec has committed to a provincial environmental assessment of the energies project; Ontario so far has not.

Will the Premier follow the lead of Quebec and commit to a full provincial environmental assessment of the Energy East pipeline?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite has listened to what both Premier Couillard and I and, this morning, Premier Prentice, have said in the public realm. We've been very clear that the principles that we put in place are things that we believe need to be considered, need to be part of the discussion at the National Energy Board.

We recognize that the NEB has jurisdiction over this decision. The Minister of Energy, through the Ontario Energy Board, has put a process in place that will gather input that will form the body of the intervention with the National Energy Board.

But I have been working very hard with Premiers across this country to put in place a Canadian energy strategy. I believe that having a Canadian energy strategy that looks at how we can all do our part—whether it's on greenhouse gas emissions or whether it's on clean renewable energy, we all have a role to play. That's the work that I've been doing with Premiers across the country.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, as you sometimes say, I heard a no.

Unlike Quebec, Ontario refuses to conduct a provincial environmental assessment of Energy East. The Premier says the federal process is good enough, even after Stephen Harper gutted the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. But provinces like British Columbia and Quebec have refused to leave their fate in the hands of Stephen Harper. Their Premiers have said pipeline projects in their provinces will not proceed unless it is in their province's interests.

Will the Premier make the same commitment to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member would know that the National Energy Board has jurisdiction over this issue. The province of Ontario and all the other provinces can only go there as interveners and provide information. By the time we're ready to make the submissions, there will not be enough time to complete an environmental assessment. That's number one.

Number two: We were ahead of the game almost a year ago by asking the Ontario Energy Board to consult across the province of Ontario. There were technical inputs, there were sociological inputs, there were all kinds of inputs that we received in our consultation. The consultation is not yet completed. Since the application has just been filed recently, we are going to open up the consultations once again. So all the environmentalists, all the businesses and the gas companies that are opposed to TransCanada will have input into our consultation. It's thorough, it's complete, we're ahead of the game, and I don't know how Quebec is going to do it in time.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

As you're well aware, today is the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Today, the world is promoting a deeper understanding of disability issues and mobilizing support to foster a more inclusive society.

Here in Ontario, I'm proud of our government for passing the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, which helped to create a more inclusive Ontario, regardless of ability.

Ontario is recognized as a world leader in accessibility. We are the first in the world to move to a more modern regulatory regime that mandates accessibility. We're the first in the world that requires staff to be trained on accessibility. We are the first in Canada with legislation that clearly outlines the goals and timelines.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister responsible for the AODA please inform the House about the progress our government has made to make Ontario more accessible?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for joining myself and a number of our colleagues this morning here in the Legislature in getting together with Community Living and March of Dimes to celebrate the UN

International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It is a great time to thank accessibility champions across the province for the important work they've done and the great progress we've made.

Together, we've made Ontario not just accessible but one of the most accessible, if not the most accessible, leaders in the entire world. What a great competitive advantage. It's something to be very, very proud of, not just for us but for accessibility champions across the province.

The 2010 Martin Prosperity Institute outlined that having an inclusive Ontario would see a \$7.9-billion investment in gross domestic product. This isn't only good for our society, it's not only good for people with disabilities, this is something that's crucial to our competitiveness as an economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the minister for giving us an update about the steps that the Ontario government is making to make Ontario accessible.

I know the Pan and Parapan Am Games are putting a strong focus on accessibility in our province next summer. The games will showcase Ontario's para-athletes to the world. We are hosting 2,400 para-athletes and team officials, and broadcasting for the first time ever Parapan sports on live TV. The games are helping to grow the para-sports world.

In conjunction with the games, the first-ever Canadian wheelchair basketball academy was created by Wheelchair Basketball Canada. Today, high-performance wheelchair basketball athletes are training at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. These athletes have already begun using the world's first full-time, year-round daily training centre.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please explain the various strategies our government is taking to make the Pan and Parapan Am Games more accessible?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Minister responsible for the Pan and Parapan Am Games.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for her important question. We're committed to making sure that the Parapan Am and the Pan Am Games in 2015 are the most accessible games ever. In every planning stage of the games, we've thought about how to make this experience available to all people of all abilities.

All existing sporting venues are completely accessible and every new build was designed with accessibility in mind. If you go out to the Scarborough aquatics centre, you will see it is perhaps the most accessible facility in North America. When you go inside, you can see a custom-built accessible ergometer that gives athletes in wheelchairs the ability to alter their force and power while training. In the centre, there's a heat treatment recovery system that rehabilitates athletes called the HydroWorx 2000. It has an underwater treadmill, resistant jet technology and many other state-of-the-art features.

We are working to make sure these games are the most accessible ever. We are so proud, and that's why

23,000 Ontarians will be trained in accessibility training to accommodate everyone.

BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I think he was on the list to leave early.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me check, please.

I'm still going to provide the member with an opportunity to redirect, if you can do that for me, please.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker—perhaps the Premier, then.

In Manitoba, beekeepers have recently experienced higher-than-normal bee mortality. To assist with this financial burden of these uncontrollable losses, Manitoba has an insurance program to help their bee colonies. Beekeepers are paid an indemnity if overwinter losses exceed the coverage deductible. Premium costs for this program are shared 40% by the insured beekeeper, 24% by the province of Manitoba and 36% by the government of Canada.

Premier, we in the PC caucus are asking—your government has had 11 years—why have you not implemented a Manitoba-type insurance model to help our Ontario beekeepers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have implemented an Ontario program. The reality is that we have put in place supports for beekeepers who had the winter losses that we saw last year. We are working with the industry to make sure that we have an appropriate and balanced approach going forward.

Part of that is to prevent bee deaths. That is what we're aiming at. I know the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change will want to comment on the specifics around those changes.

We know it's very important that we support the beekeepers who have had these winter losses. At the same time, we've put a precautionary approach in place that will allow us to prevent bee deaths going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Our beekeepers need a very practical approach. Government does run insurance programs. I've had bees on my farms for 38 years. I have seen the losses over the years—well before neonics, for that matter.

Manitoba has an insurance program that's up and running right now. Alberta has a similar program. Now we see that Saskatchewan has started a bee mortality insurance pilot project, run through the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corp., to cover the loss of honey bees over the winter. They have tough winters, as we know, just like we had last winter. The pilot will run for three years before being evaluated to decide if it will continue. It will bring Saskatchewan in line with the bee insurance programs that are already there in Manitoba and Alberta.

You haven't followed Manitoba's lead over the last 11 years. You didn't follow Alberta's lead. Will Ontario at least consider the pilot project Saskatchewan has in place to provide risk insurance, again, to help our beekeepers in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

1120

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First of all, I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I have great respect for his work as a producer and as a beekeeper. I hope he'll take the time to have a coffee with me later to discuss this, because I think this is not a partisan issue.

Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You don't talk to me about the truth, my friend.

Mr. Speaker, we're working right now on a program very similar to the other provinces' as well, but we're focused on the priority of actually reducing bee losses, because we don't think that's good for the environment, for beekeepers or for crop producers. Bees are such a critical part on their own—the managed bee population—of our farm economy, and they're important.

I hope the member opposite will support measures that will reduce the need for the people of Ontario to actually have to pay out for losses. I assume that would be comfortable with my friends in the official opposition, of reducing the cost of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Premier: Since 2003, the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee coroner has reported on deaths due to domestic violence in the province and, each year, makes recommendations to various levels of government.

In their report released this morning, ARC points out that while some progress has been made on those recommendations, much more needs to be done.

Shamefully, not all ministries and agencies contacted for this report bothered to respond to each of the recommendations. Worse, not all agencies and ministries have bothered to implement the recommendations made in the coroner's domestic violence reviews.

Speaker, 251 women have died as a result of domestic violence in the 10 years since the DVDRC started examining this issue. Just last week, members in this House wore purple scarves in recognition of violence against women, so I know that it's a priority for the legislators in this Legislature.

Premier, what will this government do to establish monitoring mechanisms and to implement these recommendations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for this very important question. We all, I think, want to thank the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee for the report, and we'll all be reviewing the recommendations very carefully.

At the end of the day, we all have the exact same goal, which is an Ontario free of domestic violence. Of course, my heart goes out to the family that was highlighted in the media just today, I think—a terrible domestic tragedy that affected an entire family.

As the minister responsible for women's issues, it is a priority for me, and all of us, that Ontario women and everyone feel safe in their homes, their workplaces and their communities.

While Ontario has some of the lowest rates of domestic violence across Canada, we absolutely know that there is more work to be done. That's why our government has increased funding for community services that help victims of domestic violence. That has been increased by 48% since 2003. There is more work to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Unfortunately, just today there was a report of a mother and her two children who were murdered in Toronto on the weekend, having struggled to find housing in order to flee a violent situation.

Access to emergency housing is one of the recommendations in the coroner's report. Access to emergency housing remains a problem in the province of Ontario. One of the recommendations is that shelters and second-stage housing continue to receive support and funding that keeps pace with inflation.

What this group wants is to return to the Legislature next year to give this government an A for implementing the recommendations in the coroner's domestic violence review.

Why won't this government do everything in its power to ensure that all ministries and agencies comply with the coroner's recommendations, to end violence against women and to implement these very important recommendations?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think we'll all agree that one domestic violent act is one too many; one death associated with domestic violence is too many. That's why we have to keep making the investments we've been making.

Last week, my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services announced an additional \$14.5 million over the next three years to support women's shelters, counselling agencies and transitional housing.

Our government started making these investments at a time when the former government, in fact, was cutting funding to women's shelters and support.

I am pleased that next week I'll be making an important funding announcement with the Neighbours, Friends and Families immigrants and refugees campaign that will help women and their families affected by domestic violence to access the supports that are culturally and linguistically relevant and accessible.

We remain very committed to an Ontario free of domestic violence and sexual assault and sexual violence,

because we firmly believe that every woman has the right to feel safe and secure—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS STRATEGY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The members of my riding in Davenport have been asking me about the new Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council and its plan to provide better access, better quality and better value.

The minister announced an important expansion of our mental health strategy that would help us improve access to services, reduce wait times and close the gaps in our system. To help guide the implementation of this plan, our government announced a new Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. The council will provide advice on the strategy's investments, promote collaboration across sectors and report annually on the strategy's progress.

The council will be chaired by Susan Pigott, and the members of the council include people who have experienced a mental health and addiction challenge, as well as leaders from across different sectors that serve people with mental health or addictions.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask: What are the priorities of this council and what do they plan on achieving?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thanks to the member from Davenport for this very important question. The council that she's referring to—the members will provide the government with important advice as we move forward with our mental health and addictions strategy phase 2's top five priorities.

These priorities include promoting resiliency and well-being for all Ontarians by expanding proven programs in schools and in the workplace, as well as drawing on public health expertise on mental health promotion and addiction prevention.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to also, as a priority, ensure that early identification and intervention is available for those with mental illness and addictions.

We're going to, as a third priority, expand housing, employment supports and initiatives to reduce contact with the criminal justice system; and providing the right care at the right time and in the right place through initiatives such as better service coordination, addressing gaps in the system and improving transitions.

We're also going to be establishing a new funding model linked to population need, quality improvement and service integration.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: We know that approximately one in five young people in Ontario—that's more than two million—are dealing with mental health issues like anxiety, depression and eating disorders. Approximately

70% of mental health and addictions problems begin in childhood and adolescence.

Nearly 30% of my constituents in Davenport are below the age of 25. The promotion of overall healthy well-being is absolutely crucial for these young people.

Many community organizations help young people increase self-esteem, such as the Dovercourt Boys and Girls Club and others which provide support through services such as counselling, like the Abrigo Centre and the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre. However, many are looking to our government to take an active leadership role in supporting these Ontarians struggling with mental illnesses.

The first phase of the mental health strategy was focused on children and youth. Minister, how will you continue your commitment to this segment of the population in the second phase?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I, too, want to thank the member from Davenport for raising this very important question. As she said, the first three years of our mental health strategy has been focused on children and youth, and that's because it was the right and the smart thing to do, Speaker.

Today, more than an additional 50,000 children and youth and their families are benefiting from these initiatives and programs. While we are proud of our accomplishments, we know there's more to do.

My ministry will continue to work with our partners and transform the child and youth mental health system through our Moving on Mental Health plan, and promote community mobilization as we move into year 2 of our Youth Suicide Prevention Plan.

Together, we will help young people with mental health illnesses enjoy the very bright future that I think we'll all agree they deserve.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, in June 2013, the county of Renfrew published a business case for accelerating the expansion of Highway 17. In that report, it called on your ministry to identify the continued expansion from Scheel Drive to the town of Renfrew in the province's five-year capital works budget.

Furthermore, it called on the province to roll out a predictable and multi-year program to fund the planning and implementation of environmental assessment updates, property acquisition and budget allocations of the continued expansion.

The people of my riding understand that the expansion is not only essential for the local economy but also one of driver safety.

1130

Minister, it has been over a year and a half since the county released its report. Can you give us an update? Have you seen the report, and what are your comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for that question. I also want to commend him for his advocacy with respect to this particular issue and also to say to the county of Renfrew, for putting the business case for the accelerated extension of this particular highway forward, that I want to make sure they understand that it is obviously some great work that has taken place. I know there have been conversations in the past with other Ministers of Transportation regarding this project.

Of course, as the member opposite would know, the ministry understands the importance of this expansion, and we are committed to continuing to make improvements to this particular highway. For example, in 2012, as the member would know, we did finish the first phase of expansion from regional road 29 to Division Street. Phase 2, from Division Street to Scheel Drive, is currently under construction, and it's expected that this work will be completed in 2016.

Beyond that, Speaker, in 2014-15, I think it's important to note that our government is committing nearly \$2 billion to expand and repair southern Ontario's highways and bridges.

I look forward to continuing to work with this member and his county on this important project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you for that reply, Minister, but we're speaking to beyond Scheel Drive, and I will say that your predecessor did identify this as a priority project and I'm hoping that you will consider it the same.

For a decade now, I have received a steady stream of emails, letters and phone calls to my office from concerned residents and municipal leaders around the issue of Highway 17. This is a key infrastructure project in eastern Ontario. It's about local economic development. It's also an issue of public safety.

I will ask you again to accept the findings of the county's report for the accelerated extension of Highway 17 and give us a date when you'll be implementing them. We need to know what's going to happen beyond 2016 when the expansion to Scheel Drive is complete.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank that member for his supplementary question. What I didn't get to say in the opening answer was that the environmental assessments for phases 3 and 4 have been updated. Property acquisitions and designation have been initiated. Timing of construction will depend on a number of factors, including detailed design, property acquisition and additional environmental approvals.

I understand why this is important for this member, for this county and for this part of Ontario. I referenced in my initial answer the nearly \$2 billion that we're investing in southern Ontario's highways. I have heard not only from this member, but a number of members on that side of the House—the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and others—about the importance of investing in crucial infrastructure. It's why we have the Moving Ontario Forward plan:

\$29 billion over 10 years for transit, transportation and other crucial forms of infrastructure.

It is encouraging to hear members on that side of the House understand the enlightenment of our plan. I look forward to their continued support in the years to come.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. It's not easy being a student in Ontario, from studying and working full- or part-time jobs to paying the highest tuition fees in the country, but nothing makes it harder than trying to do all that while going hungry. Today, post-secondary students are one of the fastest-growing groups of food bank users. There is not one college or university campus that doesn't have some kind of food relief program, and many local food banks are setting special hours for post-secondary students.

Does the Premier think it is acceptable that increasing numbers of students must rely on food banks in order to afford post-secondary education?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't think it's acceptable in as rich a society as we live in that people would go hungry. It's why we are the first government in Ontario to have a poverty reduction strategy. It's why the focus of our post-secondary policies has been to increase accessibility, to make sure that there are grants in place, to make sure that we reduce tuition so that students would be able to access post-secondary.

So, no, I don't accept that young people should go hungry in this province, and we're working very hard to make sure that young people and families have everything they need in order to be able to thrive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This year's Hunger Report, released yesterday by the Ontario Association of Food Banks, points out that hunger is rampant on post-secondary campuses because university tuition has increased nearly 40% in just seven years. Students' budgets can't keep up with the rising prices of rent, tuition and food. This government could change that. The Liberals' sky-high tuition policies are forcing more and more students to choose between going hungry while they are studying or abandoning higher education altogether.

Why is this government making hunger another cost of higher education in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government understands the challenges that students face across this province—a number of different challenges. The member raises some good points, but she's wrong on a number of different categories as well.

We brought in a 30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant that's providing thousands of dollars of savings across this province to students. Mr. Speaker, a student today who is receiving the 30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant is paying the same amount of tuition today that they would have been paying 10 years ago. That's a fact.

That doesn't mean we're done. That doesn't mean we're not going to keep working with students in post-secondary institutions to do everything we can to improve education in our universities and colleges and to ensure that we keep a cap on tuitions.

We've lowered the amount that post-secondary institutions can raise tuitions. We're working with students. We'll continue to address the challenge.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Énergie, the Honourable Bob Chiarelli.

Speaker, as an MPP and MD, I was pleased to learn of the recent Health Canada study on the effects of wind turbines, which found no evidence—I repeat, no evidence—to support a link between wind turbine noise and self-reported illnesses, stress or impacts on sleep. This scientifically grounded study, which included participants from communities across southwestern Ontario and PEI, is considered to be an international-class study, the most comprehensive investigation to date. Health Canada's study supported Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health's conclusion that there is no direct causal link between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects.

Minister, with the results of these studies now confirming that there are no adverse health effects from wind turbine noise, will our government be relaxing its rules with regard to the siting of wind energy projects?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from Etobicoke North for the question.

Our government's priority continues to be ensuring that renewable energy projects are developed in a way that respects communities and is protective of human health and the environment.

We appreciate Health Canada's work on building the science around wind projects. It found no link between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects.

Local decision-making and health continue to be our top priorities, going forward.

Mr. Speaker, siting continues to be as important as ever. Our government has set standards for renewable energy projects, including noise limits to protect Ontarians, and we continue to have the toughest setback standards in North America, at a minimum distance of 550 metres.

Our government is committed to continuing to improve the siting of energy infrastructure in Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members please take your seats.

On December 2, Mr. Naqvi moved government notice of motion number 12. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Dunlop, Garfield	Marlow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Yakubskii, John
Gates, Wayne	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 41.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DEBI JOHNSON

Mrs. Julia Munro: I rise today to congratulate Debi Johnson from my riding, who is the recipient of the first Ontario Dairy Producers lifetime achievement award. This award is presented to an individual who has shown significant leadership that has helped to advance the

Ontario dairy industry, who has provided service or been engaged in the dairy business in Ontario and who has made a significant contribution to the dairy industry as a whole.

Debi Johnson has more than fulfilled these criteria. She has served as treasurer and secretary for the York Region Milk Committee for over 25 years. In this role, she has organized the dairy educator program and organized talks for students. This year alone, she has coordinated over 1,000 different school talks for students in York region.

Debi has also worked with the Holstein club and is frequently involved in other community work as well.

Congratulations, Debi. You're an asset to the dairy community and the wider York region community as well.

RON CHERNEY

Mr. Wayne Gates: It is with great sadness that I rise today to discuss the loss of one of Niagara's most beloved of residents, Ron Cherney.

Ron's name is not unknown to most people from Niagara, especially those from Niagara-on-the-Lake. Ron was a family man who deeply loved his wife and children. He was a dedicated man who believed that if you lived in your community then you should belong to the community and give back to the community. He was proud of where he came from and certainly his community was proud of him. Anyone who bought from his family floral and gift business, used his consultant services or attended the Virgil Stampede will know that Ron Cherney certainly gave back to his community.

Ron was a major part of the Virgil business community, making his mark on a number of lasting projects in the area. Whether it was the Virgil arena, the splash pad or the park, Ron's involvement has had a lasting impact on his community.

I'd also like to add that he was a very active member of the Queenston Lewiston Rotary Club.

There weren't many fundraisers you could go to in Niagara-on-the-Lake without seeing Ron, whether he was organizing all the entertainment for the event or the fact that he was the public announcer for the weekend. The stampede and all those who went there will certainly miss Ron.

To highlight what kind of man Ron was, on the morning of his passing, just after the first big snowstorm of the year, Ron, at the age of 69, was out shovelling his neighbours' cars out of the snow. He was an incredible man who made his community better.

CHRISTMAS CARAVAN

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm proud to rise in the House today to talk about a very special event in my riding of Etobicoke Centre. Every year the Markland Wood Homeowners Association hosts an event called the Christmas Caravan. Families and members of the com-

munity of all ages volunteer their time to join the caravan to visit every home in Markland Wood to collect non-perishable food items and clothing for charities across Toronto serving our communities. The caravan includes a police vehicle, a fire truck, a transport truck and, of course, Santa Claus, Mr. Speaker.

Last year, the caravan raised eight tonnes of food, \$750 in cash, and a tremendous amount of clothing and toys for children and charities in need. Some of the charities that benefit are the Daily Bread Food Bank, the Scott Mission and the Brothers of the Good Shepherd.

This year, I will be attending the Christmas Caravan on December 14 and encourage everyone in the community, particularly Markland Wood, to participate and support this worthy cause.

I've had the opportunity to attend this event in the past, and I must say it's amazing to see the community come together in such large numbers in the spirit of the holidays to support those in need. I think events like this one highlight the importance of community organizations such as the Markland Wood Homeowners Association, which for years has advocated for that community and, as the caravan illustrates, has served those not only in their community but in our province who are in need.

I would like to thank the Markland Wood community for their generosity. I would like to thank the Markland Wood Homeowners Association for hosting such a great event, and I'd like to congratulate them on all their past success and urge them to continue the great work that they do on behalf of the constituents of Etobicoke Centre.

CHRISTMAS SEASON

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Christmastime brings many different memories for those of us who celebrate Christmas. It's a very reflective time of year: for some, sad memories, but for others, happy memories, perhaps of times when they were younger with family or friends, or even now, as they think about the smiles on their children's faces, the excitement of the festive season, the colourful bright lights, setting up and decorating the Christmas tree and even going door to door Christmas carolling.

For me, I think about just how grateful I am for family and others in my life. As a politician, there are many Santa Claus parades or, as I call them, Christmas parades. In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, I have Christmas parades not only in Chatham, but in Tilbury, Leamington, Blenheim, Ridgetown and Wheatley.

Along the various parade routes, I can be heard shouting out "Merry Christmas" to both young and old, and that generally generates a "Merry Christmas" back to me. I also have fun with the children as I look at them, with their excited faces. I'll ask them, "How many sleeps until Christmas?" and, much to my surprise, they know how many sleeps until Christmas.

One of the traditions at our home is that we also invite a less fortunate family to share Christmas with us, and, together, we enjoy a delicious turkey dinner with all the

trimmings, and then we sing carols and even play some table games.

So, friends, why not make this time of year a special time of year? Reach out to someone or some family less fortunate and make it a great Christmas for them. After all, I was always taught that it was better to give than to receive.

Merry Christmas, everyone.

BORIS NATYSHAK

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm going to dispense with tradition—and possibly convention—in using my member's statement not to acknowledge the great things that I know happen in my riding but to say hi to my dad, who has come to Toronto, who has been admitted to St. Mike's Hospital to receive a heart valve procedure. So he's there right now; I'm here. I'll be joining my mom and my dad very soon, as soon as my House duty is done.

I want to tell my dad that I love him, and I thank him for everything he has ever done, to be strong and to not be ornery like he typically is and to treat my mom, you know, the way that she deserves to be treated—as an angel. And don't be so mean, but be strong and know that you're in the right place and that our health care system that you fought for your entire life is here to provide for you, to make sure that you're going to get well.

It's kind of tough to get through this one, but I could think of no better way to say hi to my dad—I know you're watching, because I just called mom to tell you to tune in—and to thank my mom for everything she's doing in supporting him through this. My dad has fought to bring awareness about diabetes and to bring us to a position where we can cure that disease finally in this country and on this planet. He has struggled with that and has been the epitome of health and fitness in the way to live a healthy life. He's going through his own challenges that I'm sure he's tough enough to do.

I want to thank my sister Suzie for being the strong member of our family, to bring Boris and Sheila up to Toronto to go through this. And to all those at St. Mike's Hospital who now have to deal with my dad, Boris, I certainly understand what you're going to go through, and thank you for the care that you're going to give to my dad during this procedure. I'm very, very thankful for the professionalism and the love that you're going to give to my dad over his treatment through his heart valve surgery. Thank you.

1510

CUMBERLAND VILLAGE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Members' statements.

The member from Ottawa—Orléans, try and top that.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Yes, I'm going to try to.

Monsieur le Président, last Saturday, the Cumberland Community Association, in support of the Orléans-

Cumberland Community Resource Centre, welcomed me and many residents to an incredible day in the Cumberland village to celebrate the spirit of the holiday season with a step back in time.

It was a festive afternoon steeped in historical nostalgia. It all started with a wagon ride through the streets of the town pulled by two beautiful Canadian-bred horses.

I would like to thank Messieurs Gerry Lalonde and James Levesque, as well as Mrs. Elita Krause, for their company and this amazing opportunity.

It is with heartfelt thanks that I acknowledge the seven residents who graciously opened their home to the visitors and to those who showed up to tour the village to experience a moment in discovering the well-kept treasures of a few of the founding families of Cumberland. When visiting these homes that belonged to families like the Kennedys, the Fergusons and the Wilsons—whose home belonged to the first female Liberal Senator under the Mackenzie King government in 1930, Mrs. Cairine Wilson—I could honestly feel the echo of the past through the town. It was a magical moment and a special lesson of history.

I wish them a very, very good season of the holiday, and thank you for the invitation.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, today is the day when we observe International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Today is the day when we recognize over one billion people: 15% of the world's population live with a disability.

Today I'm proud to stand and tell you about the work being done in the constituency of Carleton—Mississippi Mills. A couple of weeks ago, I had the pleasure of touring Ottawa-Carleton Lifeskills, an agency that has been caring for people with disabilities for 30 years. Ottawa-Carleton Lifeskills offers residential and day programs, as well as independent living and home-share programs, to those living with autism, Down's syndrome and various other disabilities.

I was thrilled to meet the staff and participants alike and was amazed at the work being done. I heard from the staff that it is time that we bring those living with disabilities out from the shadows and into the sunshine, and today I would like to acknowledge all of those Ontarians who are living with a disability.

ABDIRIZAK WARSAME AND PAUL HOWARD

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'd first like to say that on this side of the House our thoughts and prayers are with the member from Essex's father and family, and it's hard to follow.

But it's my pleasure today to stand and recognize two volunteers from my riding of Ottawa South. Abdirizak Warsame recently received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Crime Prevention Ottawa. Since he arrived in Ottawa in 1989, Abdirizak has dedicated himself to helping, educating and inspiring youth and newcomers in our community. As a multicultural officer in our schools, he supported students and their families to integrate into their new environment. More recently, through OCISO, he provides spiritual and emotional support to adults in custody at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. In short, his work in the community is remarkable.

Paul Howard is also a member of my community, and he's the long-time coach of the South Ottawa Mustangs. He coaches the tyke team right now. Paul learned on Monday that he won the NFL Youth Coach of the Year award, which is a pretty big thing. It also comes with some support for the team that's really great.

Interjection: It's a big deal.

Mr. John Fraser: It is. As I said, he is coaching tykes. He focuses on an area of my riding, Herongate. It's an area that has some challenges. Paul does a lot to lift up youth and give them a good start in life.

I just want to say congratulations to both men and thank them very much for what they do for our community.

KINGSTON INTERVAL HOUSE

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I rise to tell you about another shining example of outstanding dedication in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, bearing in mind that only a few days ago we all donned purple scarves in support of ending violence against women in Ontario.

Kingston Interval House has been providing a safe and supportive space for women and children in crisis for nearly 40 years. Their continued advocacy and counselling have helped to empower a generation of vulnerable women and helped to educate our community to a greater awareness of the unfortunate facts about abuse and violence against women and children.

Just a week or so ago, I was absolutely thrilled to learn that they had been awarded just over \$100,000 by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The money will enable the appointment of a supportive housing coordinator for their Robin's Hope transitional housing project. Initiatives like this provide safety and resources at a time when major life decisions are being made; a real lifeline, in other words. I'm proud that the foundation grant will enable Interval House to continue to operate effectively.

Congratulations and thank you again to executive director Pam Havery, the board, the staff and the volunteers for your valuable work in our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

Hon. James J. Bradley: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the use of sign-language interpreters in the House today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent for the request put forward. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that during statements by the ministry and responses today, on Wednesday, December 3, sign-language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber to interpret the proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley moves that during statements by the ministry and responses today, on Wednesday, December 3, sign-language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber to interpret the proceedings. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: A little bit late, but I wanted to introduce Adam Yahn. He is the government relations manager for the Ontario Real Estate Association and a proud member of the Ontario Legiskaters. We'd like to welcome him back to Queen's Park. He's a familiar face around here for many of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think that's commonly known as a ringer.

Mr. Bill Walker: That is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So I appreciate that. Thanks for your—

Interjection: Except that he can skate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's what I meant.

I do have an introduction, so if all members would join me in welcoming, in the Speaker's gallery today, a parliamentary delegation including staff from the Parliament of Malaysia led by His Excellency Speaker Pandikar. We welcome our guests from Malaysia. They wanted to see question period and I said no.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING PASSENGER SAFETY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA SÉCURITÉ DES PASSAGERS

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for transporting a passenger for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization /

Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'augmenter la pénalité prévue à l'égard du transport de passagers moyennant rémunération sans permis de conduire, certificat d'immatriculation ou autorisation.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. John Fraser: The Protecting Passenger Safety Act amends the Highway Traffic Act. The bill gives municipalities stronger tools to protect public safety by increasing fines, adding demerit points, and licence and vehicle impoundment for operating an illegal taxi or, as they're also known, a bandit cab. It's a serious issue in my community, and I'm glad to be able to have presented this bill.

RIGHT TO CARE ACT (CHILDREN 16 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER), 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE DROIT AUX SOINS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ENFANTS DE 16 ANS ET PLUS

Mr. McDonell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act with respect to children 16 years of age and older / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne les enfants de 16 ans et plus.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Jim McDonell: The bill amends the Child and Family Services Act. Section 1 of the act is amended to include a new purpose of the act which will recognize that services provided under the act should be provided in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At present, section 29 of the act prohibits a temporary care agreement from being made in respect to a child who is 16 years of age or older. Section 29 is amended to allow temporary care agreements to be made in respect to children who are 16 years of age or older.

OTTAWA SCHOOL DAY NURSERY INC. ACT, 2014

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr14, An Act to revive Ottawa School Day Nursery Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MICHAËLLE JEAN

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Last Sunday, the International Organisation of La Francophonie appointed, by consensus, the first woman and the first Canadian to the position of secretary-general of the organization. This first woman is our former Governor General, the current chancellor of the University of Ottawa and a great Canadian, Michaëlle Jean. She's also a constituent in Ottawa-Vanier.

Lorsque M^{me} Jean a annoncé sa candidature au poste de secrétaire générale de l'OIF, je lui ai tout de suite accordé mon appui officiel au nom du gouvernement de l'Ontario. Je prends cette occasion pour exprimer à quel point je suis fière de la voir accéder à cette prestigieuse fonction au sein de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.

All of Canada welcomes this nomination with pride and hope. Michaëlle Jean has already proclaimed that she will direct her actions within the International Organisation of La Francophonie to helping women, children and youth in francophone and francophile countries so they can reach their full potential.

Michaëlle Jean will certainly inspire a movement of greater solidarity with women and children and between peoples of the northern and southern hemispheres.

Les francophones au Canada connaissent bien M^{me} Jean. Plusieurs l'ont connue comme journaliste et animatrice de grand renom pour Radio-Canada pendant plus de 10 ans. De plus, qui peut ignorer son travail remarquable auprès de femmes victimes de violence conjugale et de la violence envers les enfants? Tout à l'honneur de ses aptitudes rassembleuses, elle est, depuis le 1^{er} octobre 2010, l'envoyée spéciale de l'UNESCO pour la reconstruction d'Haïti, où elle travaille pour répondre aux espoirs et aux besoins du pays.

M^{me} Jean est à l'image d'une francophonie canadienne moderne et exemplaire, tournée vers le monde, généreuse de son temps, et qui se donne sans compter.

Un beau proverbe haïtien dit : « Quand il pleut de la solidarité, c'est de l'amitié qui pousse. » L'Ontario, terre d'accueil de milliers de francophones, est déjà une grande amie des pays membres de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. Nous sommes solidaires, accueillants et heureux de la belle diversité culturelle que notre collaboration au sein de la Francophonie favorise.

Je profite de l'occasion pour rappeler que l'Ontario participe activement à la Francophonie internationale depuis plus d'une décennie en assistant, notamment, aux sommets de la Francophonie. La mise en oeuvre de la commémoration du 400^e anniversaire de la présence

française en Ontario bat son plein. L'élection de Michaëlle Jean arrive donc à point nommé pour mettre en évidence, encore une fois, la vitalité de la Francophonie en Ontario, au Canada et dans le monde.

Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, je vous invite donc à joindre votre voix à la mienne pour féliciter chaleureusement M^{me} Michaëlle Jean, qui va maintenant être le visage et la voix de la Francophonie dans le monde entier. Et quoi de mieux que d'avoir une Franco-Ontarienne d'adoption qui va maintenant incarner cette vitalité francophone? Merci, et bonne fin de journée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup, madame la Ministre.

Statements by ministries.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to rise today in the House to recognize the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Today, we have an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments we've made together in making Ontario more accessible.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that Ontario is a leader in accessibility. In 2005, our government introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This landmark legislation, which received unanimous support from all parties in this Legislature, made Ontario the first jurisdiction to mandate accessibility. Together, we've made great strides towards this goal over the past nine years. This has been accomplished by working with our partners in the private, public and non-profit sectors.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is privileged to have a new special adviser on accessibility. A few weeks ago, our government appointed former Lieutenant Governor David Onley to this role. Working together, with David Onley's leadership, our government will continue to break down barriers for people with disabilities, promote the economic benefit of inclusion and champion accessibility across the province.

David Onley is right when he says that moving a person dependent on government benefits to the role of a taxpayer just makes good business and economic sense. The fact is, according to the Martin Prosperity Institute, making Ontario an accessible province will add \$7.9 billion to our GDP.

Last year, Ontario appointed Mayo Moran, provost of Trinity College at the University of Toronto, to lead an in-depth review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Provost Moran has just completed her review, and I now have her report. I'd like to thank Provost Moran for her hard work. I look forward to reviewing her recommendations and tabling them in this Legislature at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I've recently received recommendations following the first review of our province's accessibility standard on customer service. I'd like to extend my deepest gratitude, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council/Standards

Development Committee, led by Chair Jim Sanders, for their thorough review. I know my honourable colleagues will all want to join me in welcoming members of the council and committee to the Legislature today: Michelle Saunders, Dean Walker, John Hendry and Gary Rygus, who are in the House—I think three out of the four at least are in the House today. Thank you so much for your service to this province and for being champions of accessibility.

1530

Today and every day, we must recognize that while we've come a long way, there's still a lot of work ahead of us. Removing barriers and building an accessible Ontario is a goal we all share. We don't want anything to stand in the way of Ontarians participating in their communities or their workplaces. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we've been working to make sure the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors know about Ontario's accessibility law.

This fall, we launched a marketing campaign to educate businesses on what they need to do to comply with the law. We have tools and resources available at no cost to help them meet their requirements. That being said, I truly believe there's more work to do to make Ontarians and businesses aware of the business case of becoming more accessible, as well as the obligations of businesses and organizations under the act.

Next year we will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It's a chance for us to celebrate just how far we've come. It's also an opportunity to reflect on our vision for the next 10 years as we work towards our goal of an accessible province by 2025. By that, I mean the 10th anniversary is an ideal time to identify not only where we're succeeding, but also where we're falling short. We have ambitious goals. Now is an opportunity to recalibrate and create even more momentum towards making Ontario more accessible.

This coming year will be marked by celebrations in communities across Ontario. I encourage all Ontarians to find a way to acknowledge this momentous occasion.

Next year, Ontario will host the 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games. The games will give us a chance to show people around the world Ontario's leadership in accessibility. I'm proud to say that over 20,000 volunteers are being trained to provide an accessible games experience.

You know, we really ought to be excited about the opportunities that lie ahead of us to build a more inclusive society and maintain our position as a global leader in accessibility. The fact is that one in seven people currently has a disability. This number is expected to rise to one in five over the next 20 years as our population ages. Our generation has the capability to ensure that all Ontarians will have an opportunity to participate fully in everyday life. At the same time, our efforts will make Ontario more competitive, boost productivity and strengthen our economy.

Together, let us seize this opportunity. Together, let us make Ontario more accessible, more competitive, and more prosperous for us all.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I rise today to join my colleagues in marking the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This day is an opportunity to promote awareness, build understanding, and mobilize support for the inclusion of all persons with disabilities. It is an opportunity for all of us to recognize on a global scale the benefits of a future where persons with disabilities are included in every aspect of society and how we can make our communities better places to live for everyone.

The United Nations estimates that people with disabilities make up nearly 15% of the world's population. That's more than one billion people. Many live in poverty, face discrimination, and have limited opportunities for growth.

In Ontario, it is estimated that one in seven people has some type of disability. This includes 62,000 adults and 28,000 children living with a developmental disability. If our province is to realize its full potential, we must be sure that all Ontarians can reach their potential.

Realising our collective potential starts with inclusion. That is what has inspired our developmental services investment plan. We are investing \$810 million over three years, the largest-ever funding increase to the developmental services system in Ontario.

It will provide direct funding to thousands of people so they can participate more fully in the community, offering more choice and flexibility of supports than ever before.

It will promote inclusive work environments and opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to find competitive employment, develop successful job skills and contribute to the growth of the province.

The plan will also provide residential supports for an additional 1,400 people with urgent needs.

In addition, we are investing up to \$15 million over the next three years in an employment and modernization fund which will offer financial support to projects for individuals with developmental disabilities through employment, and for projects that increase the efficiency, collaboration and innovation in our service delivery network.

Through the work of our housing task force, this investment will broaden the range of inclusive housing options for people with developmental disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to building Ontario up by investing in people and providing the most vulnerable in our society with the supports they need to succeed. This will be achieved through our continued investments and through the long-term transformation of the social assistance system.

Since 2003, our government has increased rates for people with disabilities receiving Ontario Disability Support Program benefits by 17.2%. Last year, we changed the rules for income earnings while receiving social assistance. Now everyone who works can earn more

without having their assistance benefits reduced. Next spring, we will create a new flexible employment benefit to better support the employment goals of social assistance clients.

Today, we posted the 2014 report on the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities on my ministry's website. This agreement reflects our shared commitment to support employment programs for Ontarians with disabilities, including social assistance clients and post-secondary students with disabilities. As well, it gives Ontario the ability to continue successful programs that are helping remove barriers for people with disabilities so they can seek training, find jobs and build careers. For clients with disabilities, this approach is allowing us to invest more in everyone who wants to work, no matter what stage they're at in their employment journey.

Mr. Speaker, it is motivating to see the roots of inclusion already planted in this province. They're evident at the Scugog library in Port Perry, where Community Living Durham North teaches people successful workplace skills so they can move forward to gain employment in community. In my own riding of Oak Ridges-Markham, Community Living York South is working with local businesses to hire people with developmental disabilities and to promote the participation of young people with developmental disabilities in the workforce. In Ottawa, LiveWorkPlay is working with local car dealerships who are hiring young adults with developmental disabilities because of their skills and abilities.

Partnerships between government, families and communities are crucial to building a truly inclusive, supportive society, and these are a few examples of the inspiring work that is being done. I want to thank our community partners for the amazing work they do to empower people with disabilities to live as independently as possible in their communities.

This idea of a truly inclusive and supportive society is embedded in our multi-year transformation plan for developmental services and our long-term transformation agenda for the social assistance system.

Ontario has come a long way in promoting inclusion, integration and true citizenship for people with disabilities, but there is much more to be done. As Minister of Community and Social Services, I am looking forward to advancing our government's priorities and ensuring Ontarians with disabilities are best supported. My mandate is to drive forward the transformation of supports for those living with disabilities. Our government is committed to reforming the delivery of services and supports available to those through Developmental Services Ontario and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

I call upon every member of this House and every community in this province to join us in building an Ontario which embraces diversity in all its forms and values the contributions of all our citizens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I understand we have a rotation agreement. Responses.

MICHAËLLE JEAN

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure and an honour to rise to congratulate Madam Michaëlle Jean in her post as the secretary general of l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, appointed by consensus.

1540

J'aimerais ajouter ma voix à celles de mes collègues et à celles de ma leader, Andrea Horwath, et de notre porte-parole dans les affaires francophones, notre membre de Nickel Belt, M^{me} France Gélinas, et féliciter M^{me} Michaëlle Jean de ses nouvelles fonctions comme secrétaire générale de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, OIF, également connue simplement comme la Francophonie. Elle succède aux deux premiers présidents : Boutros Boutros-Ghali et Abdou Diouf, l'ancien président du Sénégal.

Elle est déjà bien connue comme la gouverneure générale du Canada de 2005 à 2010 et aussi la chancelière de l'Université d'Ottawa, et pour son engagement exceptionnel envers les jeunes et les femmes.

L'OIF sert à défendre la langue et la culture francophone, ainsi que les valeurs de la Francophonie, telles que la paix, la démocratie et les droits humains.

Ici, en Ontario, plusieurs députés comme moi, francophone et francophile, sont membres de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, l'APF. Nous aurons la chance de travailler avec M^{me} Jean dans le cadre des travaux de l'APF.

Je suis certain que M^{me} Jean assumera ses responsabilités avec distinction et je lui souhaite beaucoup de succès de la part de notre parti.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is a privilege to rise on behalf of New Democrats to recognize the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This day has helped to promote understanding and awareness of disability issues and the importance of ensuring that the rights of all persons with disabilities are respected.

On behalf of the NDP caucus, we also wish to thank David Lepofsky and the AODA Alliance for all of their hard work on disability issues over these many years.

I also want to applaud the strong, dedicated advocates for disability rights in my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh, people such as Dean LaBute and others right across this province who work each day to protect and expand disability rights.

Speaker, I'm sure, like you, we have many friends and acquaintances who are disabled. I have many friends, some who were born disabled and some who became disabled after unfortunate car accidents or a slip and fall.

One man I know sat back after a good meal. He pushed his chair back from the table. The chair was one of the old kind with four wheels, four legs. The chair fell over and he fell out and broke his back. He broke vertebrae and was left a paraplegic.

Another friend, Greg, was a high school teacher. He had a nice Corvette; unfortunately, he had a terrible car accident and was damaged for life.

Donny, another really good friend, on the night he graduated from high school dove into a swimming pool and ended up as a paraplegic.

My wife used to manage a group home for the disabled in Forest Glade in Windsor. It was an innovative initiative, a home with staff, apartments and 24-hour care. Actually, now the government is doing away with the home, closing it down and moving the clients into high-rise apartments. The staff will make individual visits. They'll have to go to the high-rises to feed, bathe and tend to the needs of those who used to be just down the hall. I'm told some people think this is progress; I don't. I don't see how they're going to save money.

We used to spend a lot of time at the ALPHA Apartments. Actually, at this time of the year, believe it or not, I'd dress up as Santa Claus and have a lot of fun. We'd have summer barbecues. The staff were absolutely fabulous. We sponsored a T-ball team, and I coached it. The first time we played, we actually won the championship in our first season.

My friends who lived in the ALPHA Apartments used to call us, those of us without a disability, TABs. That's right, TABs, temporarily able-bodied, because we're only one slip and fall away, one terrible car accident, one mistake in going swimming or diving into a pool.

The United Nations does a good job. This is the one day of the year that they bring this to our attention. We bring it to the public's attention. Thank you to the United Nations for proclaiming this day the day to recognize those with disabilities and to honour disability rights.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I consider this a real honour to have the chance to speak on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus in recognition of the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. I want to thank the Ministers of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure and Community and Social Services for their gracious remarks this afternoon as well.

All of us know someone who has a disability. We know them as everyday heroes for the way they approach life and overcome every challenge that comes their way. Each year on December 3, we reflect on the issues that affect people with disabilities around the world. This day is meant to raise awareness of the outstanding contribution that people with disabilities make and have the potential to make if we support them to overcome the challenges they face and to mobilize support for their dignity, rights and well-being. According to the United Nations, there are over one billion people around the world with some form of disability.

This year's theme is "Sustainable Development: the Promise of Technology." It will focus on how we can use the power of technology to promote inclusion and

accessibility. Advances in modern technology have the potential to help people with disabilities integrate more fully and provide them with the tools they need to help them become full participants in our society, including in the economy. Technology also allows people with disabilities to become strong and meaningful contributors in every way. We must all strive to work together to encourage the creation of workplaces that are open and accessible to allow everyone the opportunity to fully participate in our workforce.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize our colleague the member for Whitby—Oshawa for the great work that she has done and the leadership she has shown in advocating for people with disabilities here in this House. It's because of her hard work and persistence that this Legislature established the Select Committee on Developmental Services. The committee presented its final report this past summer, making 46 recommendations.

The committee recommended that services for people with disabilities be brought together under one ministry to streamline the process and provide easier access to services. It also recommended ending waiting lists for services and supports within the next 12 months and ensuring that children who receive funding for personal support workers, respite and community programs are able to transition seamlessly into adult programs when they turn 18. These are all common-sense suggestions that I think we all can support. Indeed, we have a duty to do everything we can to help support people living with disabilities in this province, and I urge the government to implement these recommendations as soon as possible.

Let us not think of people with disabilities in terms of what they're unable to do. Let us instead see them for what they can do.

MICHAËLLE JEAN

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je veux parler pour le caucus conservateur aujourd'hui et j'offre mes félicitations à la nouvelle secrétaire générale pour l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, Michaëlle Jean.

Aujourd'hui on a eu une petite réunion avec François Boileau, de la commission de la langue française, ici. On a mangé un peu. On a parlé avec François au sujet des services francophones, des services en français pour tout le monde ici en Ontario.

On souhaite qu'on puisse avoir plusieurs immigrants qui parlent français, pas seulement du Québec et pas seulement du reste du Canada, mais du monde. On a plusieurs pays au monde où on a des gens qui veulent travailler ici en Ontario, et on devrait même offrir des services en français pour tout le monde—des services gouvernementaux, mais aussi des services pour la santé et des services pour le système de justice.

Alors, je vais voyager avec d'autres membres à la Conférence des femmes de la Francophonie ce février en Italie. Ce sera très intéressant. J'espère que Michaëlle Jean peut nous joindre.

Encore, je veux offrir mes félicitations à la nouvelle secrétaire générale—la première femme et une Canadienne.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

I thank all members for their comments and their responses.

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PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on wind development projects awaiting approval until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

“Whereas the provincial Liberal government's study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

“Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately.”

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Tyler.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

“Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the following actions:

“(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;

“(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

“(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario.”

I affix my name to this petition, fully support it and will give it to page Ethan to take to the table.

LEGAL AID

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human and social services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of new and existing funding in the Ontario budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Steven to take to the Clerk.

HOSPICE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a discrepancy between how hospices are funded in Ontario; and

"Whereas Matthews House Hospice is the lowest-funded hospice in the Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and among the lowest-funded in the province, even though it serves as many clients or more than other hospices that receive greater provincial support; and

"Whereas Matthews House has been told by the Central LHIN that LHINs do not fund residential hospice operational costs and yet hospices in other LHINs, including Barrie, Huntsville, Richmond Hill, Owen Sound and now Collingwood, all receive operational funding from the province; and

"Whereas in February 2010 Matthews House Hospice was promised a solution to its underfunding by the Central LHIN which has never materialized;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Wynne government immediately develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with hospice funding to ensure that people in south Simcoe and all Ontarians receive equal access to end-of-life care."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll be reading a petition on the Ring of Fire.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines granted Noront Resources an exploration permit on April 19, 2013; and

"Whereas this permit is for a duration of three years with possibility of a three-year renewal; and

"Whereas the public consultation period (EBR registry #011-8444) was held between February 26, 2013, and March 28, 2013, with no comments received; and

"Whereas the shareholders of this company expect the law to be upheld for Noront Resources and for this company to be allowed to explore as per the permit received;

"We, the undersigned,"—there are several hundred signatures here—"petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to release the exploration permit and road permit for Noront Resources before the shareholder price is further damaged."

I agree with this. I sign my name to this and give this to page Haniah.

CEMETERIES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I have a petition to present:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cemeteries do not allow for the burial of a dog's body with their human owner's body in the same cemetery, we the petitioners (dedicated animal rights advocates and animal lovers) ask that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize our love for our pets and allow for the burial of pets with people in the same cemetery without having to resort to cremation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that we the people be given the right to be buried with our animal pets in the same burial plot or within adjacent burial plots in the same cemetery without having to resort to cremation."

I sign the petition and pass it to Claudia for presentation.

WANSTEAD TRANSMISSION STATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. By way of prelude, I'd like to thank Owen Byers, the former warden of Lambton county, who collected this.

"Whereas the Wanstead Transmission Station, the critical link in delivering power to the majority of residents in the communities of Oil Springs, Petrolia, Alvinston and Warwick, is owned, operated and maintained by Hydro One; and

"Whereas there have been a total of 126 power failures at the Wanstead Transmission Station over the last two years, cutting power to the surrounding communities, leading to property damage in countless homes from

sump pump failure and flooding, to expensive equipment damage in small businesses and industrial facilities; and

"Whereas Hydro One has no plans to remedy the situation before 2018;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario requesting that the Minister of Energy direct Hydro One to immediately begin the work of upgrading the Wanstead Transmission Station and all supporting feeder and distribution lines, so that all residents and businesses in the communities of Oil Springs, Petrolia, Alvinston and Warwick have access to consistent, dependable power."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it down with Maja.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I am pleased to rise here today and read this petition for an east Toronto French secondary school for grades 7 to 12.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto (Beaches–East York and Toronto–Danforth) and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school (grades 7-12) yet in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

"Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 7 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools, and yet, not a single French secondary school has opened in east Toronto; and

"Whereas the commissioner of French-language services stated in a report in June 2011 that '... time is running out to address the serious shortage of at least one new French-language school at the secondary level in the eastern part of the city of Toronto'; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education and that the various components of our education system should be aligned to serve the needs of students; and

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"Whereas parents and students from both French Catholic and French public elementary schools in east Toronto are prepared to find common ground across all language school systems to secure space for a French-language secondary school in east Toronto;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school (grades 7-12) in the community by September 2015, so that French students have a secondary school close to" home.

Monsieur le Président, je suis d'accord. I'm going to affix my name to this and give it to page Vida. Merci beaucoup.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for that petition—I mean, speech.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas vulnerable senior citizens in need of hospital care are being referred to respite care in retirement residences ill-equipped to deal with severe patients' health issues; and

"Whereas such referrals place a significant financial burden on patients' families, often in excess of \$3,000 per month; and

"Whereas these referrals are unnecessary when local hospitals have available beds but cannot afford to use or staff them due to funding cuts;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately cease the practice of referring vulnerable senior patients to respite care in retirement residences, ensure patients in need of acute care are treated in hospitals and to review all funding arrangements in order to enable hospitals to operate all available beds and wards."

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Ella.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I don't have a petition—just kidding.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas social assistance benefits in Ontario leave recipients far below the poverty line, struggling to meet the basic costs of living, and without any resources to handle emergencies;

"Whereas the provincial government recently cut the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit;

"Whereas the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit helped families pay for basic utilities in emergency situations and helped prevent people from becoming homeless;

"Whereas this program provided options for vulnerable people including women, children and people with disabilities to escape domestic violence and transition to safer housing;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario restore full funding for the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit and ensure that it goes directly to those who need it."

I sign this petition and give it to page Elijah to deliver.

YORK REGION CHAIR

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Bill 42, Municipal Amendment Act (Election of Chair of York Region), 2014

"Whereas the regional chair and CEO of York region is currently appointed by York region council; and

"Whereas the position of regional chair and CEO of York region is an office of significant influence, including a nearly \$3-billion budget;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government pass the Municipal Amendment Act, resulting in the regional chair and CEO of York region being elected by the residents of York region."

I attach my signature and give it to page Hannah.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in rural Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers, and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I approve of this petition, sign it and give it to page Johann.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member, just in time, from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I am very happy to support this petition, Speaker. I will sign my name and hand it to page Kelsey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The time for petitions is over.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Welland, I'll inform you that she had two seconds when she stood up. You seemed concerned about that.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Out of turn?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, okay.

Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I'm required to put the question—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, sorry. Orders of the day. Now you've got me all confused. Everybody's crying and complaining, and they've got me all confused.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY
GENERATING FACILITIES
AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX,
DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 1, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / *Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Let's try this again. Pursuant to the order of House passed earlier today, I'm now required to call the question.

Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I have a slip for vote deferral: Pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on this reading of Bill 35 be deferred until after question period tomorrow, December 4.

Second reading vote deferred.

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Ms. Damerla moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / *Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2014 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Damerla has the floor.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I am truly pleased to rise today to speak further to our proposed new legislation, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014, that I introduced on November 24.

Before I go any further, I would like to acknowledge a few special visitors who are with us in the House today. We are joined, in the members' gallery, by Joanne Di Nardo and Rowena Pinto from the Canadian Cancer Society; and also Chris Yaccato from the Ontario Lung Association. Many of us know Chris from his previous

life working in the Speaker's office. I also want to recognize three youth advocates from the Lung Association: Monica Sarkar, Vicki Poullos and Janna Patrick.

Thank you so much, to every single one of you, for being here and for your hard work, your advocacy on behalf of all Ontarians. Your efforts, I can truly say, have played a key role in bringing this proposed legislation to the House today.

Speaker, before I go any further, I do want to say that I will be sharing my time with my two parliamentary assistants, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Halton.

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Before I proceed, I also want to acknowledge the work done by the former Minister of Health, Minister Deb Matthews, on this file, as well as the work done by the member from Nickel Belt on the wellness file. I want to acknowledge her contributions.

Speaker, I want to start by saying that as the associate minister responsible for wellness, I believe that prevention is better than cure, and it is in that context that we have introduced this bill. I believe that as legislators we can play an essential role. We can help ensure Ontarians have the information they need to make better choices about staying healthy, and we can also help to protect Ontarians, especially the youngest amongst us, from dangers to their health and well-being.

The bill before us contains three pieces of proposed legislation. While each schedule of this bill is distinct, all of them are predicated on the idea that if you eat better, exercise more and smoke less, up to 90% of type 2 diabetes, 80% of coronary heart disease and a third of all cancers can be avoided. It is in the context of these numbers that we're introducing this bill.

I want to begin by speaking first about smoking less. We all know the dangers of tobacco smoke, and our government has taken action to protect our kids from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. In fact, this legislation falls on the heels of the amendments we recently made to regulations under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to prohibit smoking on and around playgrounds and publicly owned sports fields and surfaces, the sale of tobacco on university and college campuses, and smoking on bar and restaurant patios.

The intent of the first part of this proposed legislation is the same: to limit the access of our children to tobacco and to protect Ontarians from second-hand smoke. The idea is very simple. If we are truly serious about making Ontario the lowest-smoking jurisdiction in Canada, we have to prevent the next generation of smokers, we have to prevent our children from taking up smoking. Our record on tobacco control through the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy has made Ontario a leading jurisdiction in this area.

I'm pleased to say that partly as a result of our efforts, smoking rates have decreased in Ontario, from 24.5% in 2000 to 18.1% in 2013. That's over 300,000 fewer smokers in Ontario. Today, Ontario has the second-lowest smoking rates in Canada, after BC, but we want

Ontario to be the jurisdiction with the lowest smoking rates in Canada.

We've also taken strong action to reduce the supply of low-cost illegal tobacco. I want to thank the Minister of Finance for his dedication to getting illegal tobacco off the streets. Ontario's enforcement activities have resulted in the successful seizure of more than 235 million illegal cigarettes, 3.2 million untaxed cigars and 95 million grams of untaxed fine cut or other tobacco products over the past six years. Just yesterday, we posted regulations for our tobacco oversight system, which will cut down on the availability of raw leaf contraband tobacco. These regulations will come into force on January 1, 2015.

But there is more to be done. I am proud of our record, but I'm also determined to have the lowest smoking rate in the country.

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease and premature death in Ontario. It also poses a significant financial burden on the province. Since most people start smoking young, preventing young people from taking up tobacco is a particularly effective way to achieve our goal of making Ontario the lowest-smoking jurisdiction in Canada, and more importantly, improving health outcomes. Protecting young Ontarians from exposure to second-hand smoke is just as important. It is these compelling facts that form the backdrop against which we need to consider the proposed legislation.

This bill, if passed, would impose a ban on the sale of flavoured tobacco products, including menthol. To prevent kids from starting to smoke and becoming regular smokers, we propose to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and Ontario regulation 48/06 made under it, by prohibiting the sale of flavoured tobacco products. The ban would apply to all flavoured tobacco products, including cigarettes, blunt wraps, cigars, pipe tobacco, smokeless tobacco and water pipe tobacco.

We're also proposing a ban on menthol-flavoured tobacco, after a phase-in period of up to two years. This represents a difference from the proposal we brought before the House a year ago. And members may wonder what has changed. Well, what has changed, Speaker, is new evidence. We have new, compelling evidence which shows that young people often become regular smokers when they start off with flavoured tobacco, especially so when they're smoking menthol. In 2012-13, for instance, 57,000 Ontario students in grades 6 to 12 lit up using flavoured tobacco. Almost half of these young smokers used flavoured tobacco. One in four smoked menthol cigarettes, making it by far the most popular flavour amongst youth. And menthol users smoke almost a pack more per week compared with non-menthol smokers.

The US Food and Drug Administration released a scientific evaluation in 2013 which found that menthol flavouring in cigarettes, by cooling the throat and reducing the harsh sensation of tobacco, makes it more tolerable for new smokers. That increases the chances of addiction and makes it harder for young smokers to quit. Based on these findings, the FDA concluded that menthol-flavoured cigarettes likely pose a public health

risk above that seen with non-menthol-flavoured cigarettes.

The FDA shares the concerns of a number of public health and tobacco control organizations which have publicly supported banning the sale of menthol-flavoured tobacco products, including the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Lung Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and the Ontario Medical Association.

In October of this year, the OMA in a news release urged the government to ban menthol-flavoured tobacco products, given the new evidence that has emerged showing that underage smokers who use menthol cigarettes smoke more often, and are more likely to continue the habit later in life.

The second part of this proposed legislation deals with electronic cigarettes, commonly called e-cigarettes. Our approach is specifically aimed at preventing minors from accessing and taking up the use of e-cigarettes. The proposed legislation would define e-cigarettes as those with or without nicotine, and would regulate the sale, display, promotion and use of the products.

If passed, the legislation would bring about a number of important changes.

First, it would ban the sale and supply of e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 19, and require retailers to request ID from anyone who appears to be under 25. It would also require retailers to post signs explaining age-based sales restrictions. It would also prohibit a person from using false identification to purchase e-cigarettes.

It would prohibit the display and promotion of e-cigarettes at points of sale and prevent a place of entertainment from employing or authorizing anyone to promote e-cigarettes at the place of entertainment. The sale of e-cigarettes would also be prohibited in places such as vending machines, health care facilities and schools.

The use of e-cigarettes would not be allowed in certain enclosed public places, and employers and proprietors would need to ensure compliance.

It would protect home health care workers from the potential harmful effects of e-cigarette vapour.

It would give inspectors the power to enforce the legislation and ensure compliance.

Lastly, the legislation, if passed, would make it an offence to violate the proposed legislation, and establish maximum fines.

We recognize that e-cigarettes are a new product and an emerging concern. I believe that this should remain a legal and accessible product for adults, but I also believe we must act today to protect kids. We have now had a generation of Ontarians who have grown up in the province where lighting up a cigarette in a restaurant or on a GO Train is unacceptable. We don't want to turn back the clock.

But on the other hand, we want to leave the door open to the possibility that e-cigarettes may be able to help some smokers break their addiction. Right now, my ministry is supporting research into these areas. In the meantime, we have designed this legislation to provide the Lieutenant Governor in Council with the regulation-

making authority to address emerging issues as evidence becomes available. For example, if evidence emerges that e-cigarettes are useful as cessation aids, we may want to reconsider both the prohibition of sale in certain places and the point-of-sale display ban. This proposed legislation would give the government the authority to do so.

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Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about the third part of this legislation, which is the posting of calories in restaurants. Under the proposed legislation, any food service premises or restaurant that has more than 20 locations in Ontario would have to post the calorie content next to the menu board. They would also have to provide contextual information, such as the average amount of calories an adult should be taking in a day, to give context to the calories that being posted.

I want to say that this portion of the legislation has a particular resonance for me. I want to share a story that some of you might be able to relate to. In my first campaign, in 2011, one of the things I was looking forward to was that I would lose some weight. They say you run for office for a reason. As all of us in this House know, we are literally on the run. I was looking forward to losing some weight. As it turned out, at the end of that election I actually gained weight. I was a little surprised at that, but I didn't think much of it until one day—am I okay for time? I have these people signalling me, so I just wanted to make sure.

To continue, one fine day, I Googled some information and realized that a medium Iced Capp at Tim Hortons can have up to 400 calories. That particular election, you may remember, was in a very hot summer. I was drinking two and sometimes three cups of Iced Capp, thinking, "Oh well, I'm walking so much." But I didn't realize how many calories an Iced Capp packs. To have that kind of contextual information, to be able to go into a Tim Hortons or any other restaurant and say, "This muffin has so many calories," or, "This Iced Capp has so many calories," I believe is powerful information that will enable Ontarians to eat in a healthy manner and make decisions, and most importantly, empower Ontarians to make those decisions.

All in all, I'm very pleased to present this bill, which is aimed at helping Ontario become the lowest-smoking jurisdiction and helping Ontarians make healthy choices when it comes to what we eat, with particular emphasis on our children. I believe it is a bill that will have all-party support, because how can we disagree with making Ontario a healthier place, particularly for our children? I look forward to a robust debate, and I look forward to constructive feedback. Hopefully, all members in this Legislature will support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise and expand on the remarks by the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on our proposed Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014, introduced on November 24. I plan to speak on the elements of the proposed

legislation dealing with the ban on flavoured tobacco. Taking these steps would strengthen the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and help us reach our goal of having the lowest smoking rates in Canada.

As we all know, there are very compelling reasons for tackling tobacco use. Smoking is the number one cause of preventable death, preventable disease and premature death in Ontario. In fact, tobacco use accounts for close to 13,000 deaths a year in Ontario. Think about all the families who have lost loved ones to painful, preventable deaths.

Secondly, smoking places an enormous burden on our health care system. The numbers speak for themselves. Smoking causes 80% of lung cancers and 80% of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease cases. In fact, every year, tobacco-related disease costs the province an estimated \$2.2 billion in direct health care expenses and an additional \$5.3 billion in indirect costs such as lost productivity. Studies suggest that second-hand smoke exposure alone accounts for 10% of tobacco-related costs; that is, costs of direct health care as well as indirect costs from reduced productivity.

Simply put, lowering tobacco usage across the province will save money and save lives. That's why, in 2005, our government created the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy. That plan positioned Ontario as a national and international leader in tobacco control.

Most recently, last month, our government announced that we are taking further actions to reduce kids' access to tobacco and to protect the people of Ontario from exposure to tobacco smoke. We amended the regulation under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to prohibit smoking on and around playgrounds and publicly owned sports fields and surfaces. We are also prohibiting the sale of tobacco on university and college campuses. And as of January 1, 2015, Ontarians will no longer be able to light up on bar and restaurant patios.

Through these measures, we are working to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke and make it more difficult for young people to buy tobacco. Why are we taking these steps? Because it's the right thing to do. We know smoking is unhealthy, we know it costs the health care system and we know it takes lives.

Now it's time to go one step further. In our 2014 budget, our government committed to prohibiting the sale of tobacco products that contain flavours and additives that appeal to youth. Flavoured tobacco products are one of the few remaining ways that tobacco companies have to target our kids. Youth smokers are particularly susceptible to the availability of flavoured tobacco products. Research shows that flavoured tobacco products can result in young people becoming regular smokers. We're talking about flavours that are directly designed to appeal to young people, like strawberry, watermelon and even bubble gum. In fact, even the bright packaging for these cigarettes appears at times to be designed to appeal to a young smoker. As a mother of a teenager, I can tell you this is of great concern. There's no question that flavoured tobacco has become a gateway to addiction for youth.

In Canada, flavoured tobacco makes up roughly 5% of the tobacco market, and menthol-flavoured cigarettes make up over half of the flavoured tobacco market. Recent research from the US Food and Drug Administration and here in Ontario shows that menthol's cooling effect can reduce the harsh taste of tobacco, making it more tolerable for new smokers and making youth more likely to become habitual smokers. In fact, Canada's 2012-13 Youth Smoking Survey found that, as the minister mentioned, one in four Ontario high school students report having smoked menthol cigarettes in the last 30 days.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to act on flavoured tobacco, and we are going to do that by banning all flavours, be it bubble gum, watermelon or mint. With this bold action, we are working to prevent the next generation of Ontarians from becoming addicted to tobacco. Our partners in the health care, public health and tobacco control sectors are very supportive of banning the sale of flavoured tobacco products, including menthol.

Finally, this legislation also proposes to strengthen the Smoke-Free Ontario Act by increasing the fines for youth-related sales offences like selling tobacco to minors, making them the highest in Canada. Furthermore, it would strengthen inspection and enforcement powers.

I'd like to thank the many Ontarians who are highly supportive of our efforts to curb tobacco use in the province. Working together, I know we can have the lowest smoking rate in Canada, and I know we can work together to save lives and make us a healthier society.

I urge all members to support our proposed legislation. Taking these steps will save money and save many young lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to expand on the remarks by Minister Damerla, Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and my colleague from Halton on the proposed legislation, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014, that our government introduced on November 24. Specifically, I will speak further regarding the elements of the proposed legislation dealing with e-cigarettes and menu labelling.

Our government is committed to keeping Ontarians healthy, which is a major pillar of our action plan for health care. Part of that commitment is to have the lowest prevalence of smoking in Canada. We're close to that goal, second only to British Columbia right now, but we need to do better. One of the best ways to reach our goal is to prevent our young people from taking up smoking in the first place, whether it is regular cigarettes or electronic cigarettes, commonly called e-cigarettes.

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These e-cigarettes are electronic devices that are made of plastic or metal and consists of a battery, an atomizer and a cartridge. The cartridge can contain flavouring and nicotine. The atomizer heats the liquid and turns it into

vapour that the user inhales. The vapour is not smoke. It looks like smoke and it may have an odour. E-cigarettes do not use tobacco or any combustion as a delivery system, and therefore are not regulated under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. This means we need to take action to regulate this emerging technology. E-cigarettes are increasing in popularity, particularly among adolescents, because they are cheaper to use than tobacco cigarettes, easier to access and are perceived as low-risk.

Speaker, it was shocking to learn that right now kids can purchase e-cigarettes, anywhere, any time they like. They can use those e-cigarettes to "vape"—another new term in the technological world—anywhere—restaurants, sports fields—where you can't smoke right now. We do know that there is limited evidence right now regarding the impact of e-cigarettes on our health. It is even possible that e-cigarettes might at some point be approved in the future as devices that can help people quit their addiction to tobacco.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Then why are you banning them?

Mr. John Fraser: At this time, however—thank you for asking—we simply don't know their health effects or how effective e-cigarettes may be as a possible tobacco cessation aid or what, if any relationship, exists between e-cigarette use and the uptake of tobacco smoking. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will be funding two Ontario research projects so we can learn more about these topics.

Some health stakeholders have argued that e-cigarettes could be harnessed as a tobacco cessation device, but many are concerned that e-cigarettes could act as a gateway for youth to tobacco use and normalize the behaviour of smoking, jeopardizing Ontario's tobacco control efforts. Experts from the World Health Organization, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and Cancer Care Ontario have all called for a ban on the sale of e-cigarettes to minors, restrictions on their use in public places and restrictions on their advertising and promotion.

We are proposing this legislation to protect our kids, and we're building in the flexibility to respond to the changing technology and evolving knowledge about the effects of e-cigarettes. I want to make this very clear: that it is not our government's intention to remove e-cigarettes from the Ontario marketplace. We are not banning e-cigarettes. Rather, the proposed approach would take action to protect Ontario's children and youth from accessing and using a product that may pose potential harm to their health. It is a careful response to an emerging technology which may be harmful and thwart our efforts to reduce tobacco use in Ontario. And we are not alone. Three provinces have indicated they are examining a range of options related to e-cigarettes. In November, Nova Scotia received third reading and royal assent to similar legislation regulating e-cigarettes.

Mr. Speaker, right now I'd like to say a few things about menu labelling, which is part of our action plan's

commitment to keep Ontarians healthy and improve our children's lives. That's why we appointed the Healthy Kids Panel in 2012. The panel heard from many parents who said they need more help to make the healthy choice for their kids the easy choice every time. Ipsos Reid did a survey recently where 95% of Ontarians support fast food restaurants listing nutrition information on their menus. Our proposed legislation responds directly to this need. The legislation, if passed, would require large chain restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores and other food service premises with 20 locations or more that serve prepared food in Ontario to include calories on their menus. This legislation will not apply to small restaurants with a handful of locations.

This is a key component of our Healthy Kids Strategy, which tackles the serious issue of childhood obesity, one of the great risks affecting the health of young Ontarians. Studies show that 28% of Ontario children and youth are overweight or obese, and in some communities that number is even higher. We know that a large proportion of obese children—75%—grow up to become obese adults, and it's well documented that adult obesity can lead to an increased risk for chronic diseases and conditions like certain cancers and type 2 diabetes.

Many labels at the point of purchase have been shown to increase awareness of nutrition information and have been shown to influence consumer behaviour. In addition to helping parents keep their kids healthy, posting caloric information on standard food and beverage items will also help adults make healthy choices. If an adult consumes alcoholic drinks, the calories in those drinks should be considered as part of their daily caloric intake.

It was clear from the outset that improving the health of our kids would not be possible without strong industry partnerships. We know the government can't do it alone. That's why I want to thank industry leaders for their support in the effort. Some large chain restaurants have already been providing nutritional information for their customers, and I applaud their support for our efforts to provide Ontarians with even more access to this information.

I know that by working together, we can help families make healthier choices. I urge all members to support our proposed legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to stand and address Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

Speaker, you know what? There isn't one person on our side, on our PC caucus, who wants to see health care costs rise in this province, although they are escalating. I think the government needs to be spending their money wisely; it's something that perhaps they need to take a good, close look at. We want a healthy Ontario, because we know that down the road, perhaps our health care costs would be lessened.

One of the things that we talk about here is shutting down those illegal smoke shacks. That's lost revenue right now, and a lot of people will go and buy those smokes because of the fact that they're less expensive—

and of course, the government's not getting any revenue from those things.

We talk about childhood obesity and we also talk about children being overweight. There's three words that I'm compelled to say, and those three words are: You gotta wanna—forget the grammar in that. I think it's important: Children have got to want to.

As a parent, we can oversee the types of foods and the food selections, and we can encourage better food selections for our children. But one of the other things that I think is also important here is the fact that maybe the government should look at—this may be a little bit off-topic, but it's to the point. I remember back when I was in high school, one of the things that helped keep me in shape—I was in shape back then; now round is a shape. Never mind. The point being, maybe they should consider having physical education not just as one credit, but having it as four credits, one per year for every year that the students are in. That would keep them more consciously aware of getting in better shape.

The last thing I want to talk about very quickly is caloric count. One of the things I found is that I went to McDonald's one time and I was so disappointed when I looked at the menu and said, "Oh, I wanted to have this, this and this, and I can't have this." So all I did was I order a coffee, and I felt bad—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm very glad to contribute to the debate on Bill 45, because I know the member from Nickel Belt, our critic for health and long-term care, has been pushing for this bill to come forward. She is very much an advocate for labelling, because if we don't know what we're putting in our bodies, it's very difficult to make those healthy choices. I know the member from Nickel Belt isn't here today; she's going to be speaking to this bill later on.

Flavoured tobacco: That was something else that France brought up. It was very important, because we had a lobby day when this was first introduced and was becoming an awareness piece. I went down to the legislative dining room and there was a display of products. They were all wrapped and they were colourful, and they looked like actual candy. I took a picture of the products that were on display and I tweeted it out. It really brought home that the way these products are packaged, the way they are full of colour, is actually targeting—they're marketing to their clientele, the future smokers, which are children.

So I'm glad to see that we are looking very strongly at eliminating flavoured tobacco, and also at the labelling on food and in restaurants so people know, when they go out, that they have an option, they have a choice, and they can be aware of those choices before they put food in their mouth or cigarettes in their body. I'm glad this is forward, and I look forward to further debate from New Democrats.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: What a pleasure it is to rise and speak to the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care's bill and the wonderful words we received from my seatmate here from Halton and John Fraser, of course, from Ottawa South. Thank you so much.

The three pieces of this bill are so important. First off, we've got to do everything we can to reduce opportunities for smoking. I know you agree. I know you agree and we agree that's a critical piece of this bill: that we want to make sure smoking—and those of us who have not been able to resist the temptations of the evil weed and once in a while still indulge, we hope that the message we're sending here will encourage those people to not have the occasional smoke, because it's unacceptable. We're hoping very much that yes, this bill will encourage them.

Targeting kids with flavoured tobaccos: We know this is something that has to be regulated. It has to be stopped, and it has to be stopped now.

Now, the second piece on the e-cigs, let's be very clear: We're taking a precautionary approach here. We want to be able to have the capacity to regulate because the science is not clear to all of us yet.

There are people in Beaches–East York who sell e-cigarettes—Maria at a wonderful shop called The Ecig Flavourium, right on Queen Street in the Beach. She sells them. She's concerned about this legislation. It might affect her livelihood. That's not our intention. We want to make sure that the science is correct so that it's properly regulated. I know she and many others are using e-cigarettes as a replacement for what they used to do when they smoked. They didn't smoke all the time, but they're using the e-cigarettes as an opportunity to get off cigarettes. They believe that by over-regulating it we will be forcing people back to the evil weed, back to the very disastrous health outcomes. We need to stop that. If this is, in fact, helping people and it does not have negative effects, we want to make sure that we're not interfering with the rights of people to do so.

As for calories on food menus, there can be no substitute for good consumer awareness for healthy eating choices, and I hope this assists in the process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments. The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I wanted a chance to speak to this bill. There are many parts to the bill that I think we all agree with, certainly when it comes to our youth. As far as e-cigarettes, I guess it concerns me because I know a lot of people are using them to get off cigarettes. There's no science anywhere that shows that they're a problem for you or anybody else, so I'm not sure why we want to put them under the same scrutiny as cigarettes. They are non-combustible, so the elements that cause the problems aren't in e-cigarettes.

We've already beat up a lot of people, generally seniors—we used to give them to our veterans, and now we are coming back as they get immobile, not letting them smoke in buildings. I think that the e-cigarettes are

a great way to get off. We've been told that. I think there should be a little bit of scrutiny on that, because I think that there is no science to prove that they are a detriment, and they are actually a benefit for people trying to quit.

Flavoured cigarettes, I think, are a no-brainer. We don't want children smoking—and they are an enticement. But I would encourage the government to rethink the other part and to not restrict them in certain areas. They aren't a problem. They aren't a problem for anybody else like normal cigarettes, and there's no science to prove that, so let's use the science and actually look at something that may be of benefit to many people. It is a vapour.

We want to make sure, of course, that they do comply—they are a form of food and go through the same processes as normal food does for testing to make sure they are safe; but if they are, again, this is not a nanny state. Let's let people make their own decisions on things that are not harmful to themselves or anybody else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has two minutes.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to begin by thanking all of the members who spoke on this bill, including the members for Chatham–Kent–Essex, Beaches–East York, London–Fanshawe and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry; and, of course, the parliamentary assistants, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Halton. I also want to thank all of you for your support, but I did want to address a few things.

I know that the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex raised the issue of enforcement and contraband, and I just want to say, absolutely. There isn't one tool in the toolbox to reduce smoking in Ontario. We need to use all of the tools that are available in the toolbox. Our fall economic statement made it very clear that tackling the underground economy, including contraband cigarettes, is indeed a focus for this government. So thank you for that. I look forward to working with you on that.

I also wanted to address an issue that the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry raised, which is that we do recognize that electronic cigarettes are separate from tobacco, and we made a deliberate decision to create stand-alone legislation for electronic cigarettes. If you wanted to treat it as tobacco, the easiest thing would have been for us to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and add the words “electronic cigarettes.”

We could have done it that way, but we recognize that electronic cigarettes are new, and evidence might come that does suggest that indeed they are good cessation devices. If that is the case, we've deliberately created the legislation with the flexibility to respond to that through regulations. We do recognize that there is a difference between them, but we also recognize the risk that—let's face it, they are being marketed with the word “cigarette” attached to them, so there are confusing signals being sent. So we've tried to manage the risk—they're still legal, but also manage the risk that they might renormal-

ize regular cigarettes. We've tried to balance that, and I hope that addresses your issue.

On balance, I look forward to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure today to bring some comments and thoughts to Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

There's been a fair bit of discussion on this. I'm going to try to provide a bit of a balanced thought process. I'm going to break it out. There are three parts to the act, three schedules. The first schedule is the Healthy Menu Choices Act, and that will require food service premises with 20 or more locations to post calorie information for both food and beverages on their menus.

There are definitely some pros. It would support helping Ontarians to make informed—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There are some real lively debates going on and I'm having trouble hearing the man who is speaking, so if you want to have your caucus meeting, the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, you can go outside and have it.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks.

Go ahead.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm pleased that you're listening so intently.

A pro is certainly to support helping Ontarians make informed choices for themselves and their families. Many people eat at least a third of food away from home—certainly we at Queen's Park do; we're here most of the week—

Interjection: Two thirds.

Mr. Bill Walker: Two thirds, and some of my colleagues, like the member from Essex, even look in the mirror at times—I mean, look at the menu every now and again. We eat in restaurants or we're picking up prepared food on the fly. Certainly, in our lifestyles, it's one of those things that we have to be cautious of as parliamentarians, and a lot of our staff as well. We keep pretty hectic schedules. We're on the fly; we grab food wherever we can. This will help a little bit.

Some of my colleagues across the aisle are showing me that they're getting more round and rotund in this lifestyle, but I'm sure this will help them as well.

One of the things that I think no one will argue with—and this is a worldwide epidemic—is that obesity is on the rise. Certainly, more specifically and closer to home, I think the stats show that 30 years of too many calories in and too few calories burned—and one third of our children, sadly, are more obese, again, rounder and weaker physically than they were 30 years ago.

There are a lot of factors that can contribute to that. When I was a young guy, you were always on the ball diamond, on the hockey rink, on the soccer pitch; you were always out of the house doing things. Now, with a

lot more of the electronic opportunities, a lot of kids, sadly, are becoming couch potatoes. That definitely has increased. When they're making poor food choices—and a lot of our foods, again, are not as wholesome, they're not as healthy; a lot of sugar-based products.

I read a stat a little while ago that it takes three cupfuls of spinach to get the same good calorie content that used to take one cup many years ago. That is because of the way we've produced foods. We're always in a hurry to get things to market, we're trying to get things to the shelf quicker, into the consumption cycle quicker, but the health is what got missed along the way.

My original occupation was a recreation director, so I'm a big believer in healthy living, active living, keeping people healthier rather than trying to fix them once they are ill or, in this case, their health goes to a point where we're needing—you know, being overweight is a real big leader towards heart and stroke concerns and certainly cancer concerns.

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We have some guests in the crowd, and I'm not going to try to remember all the names now and reference them, but I know they're here every year, bringing us as MPPs the newest and latest thought processes on what we need to be doing. I applaud them and all the volunteers in their organizations for continuing to work. Certainly, in my great riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, a lot of the volunteers, with the support of their organizations, are coming into my office each year, more than once, giving me an update, trying to ensure that I stand in this House and do the right things for the people in my riding.

Obesity, sadly—and I'm going to focus on this a fair bit—truly does lead to diseases like diabetes, cancer and heart disease. It costs the provincial health care system \$4.5 billion. That's \$1.65 billion in direct health care costs and \$2.87 billion in indirect costs. I trust that, if we really looked at it conclusively, there's even more of a ripple effect and it's an even bigger number, which is sad. Just think what we could be doing with that money if we were using it for proactive, healthy measures and we were actually helping to keep people more healthy, particularly our children, and setting examples for all of our children out there.

In my estimation—and I believe my caucus colleagues and I would hope all members of this House would believe that we need to make fighting childhood obesity a public priority. It certainly is something that is impacting all of us as the public. It's something there needs to be a lot more focus on. If we don't, obesity will overwhelm our health budget. I think, again, if you look at any of the majors papers that are out now, they're saying that this is, all over the world, becoming more and more of an epidemic. It's something we have to address, and we have to be proactive and be very firm in our commitment to do that.

Banning junk food and slapping calorie stickers on food is just one part of it. Certainly, there's nothing as a negative; it certainly is a positive step in the right direction. But we can't be naive enough to think that just

because we put a sticker on food or we put a sign in a building, that's going to solve our ills. So we have to really think about that.

As I say, I think all of us have a duty to be a role model. Myself, I'm proud to say in the last year and a half, partly because of the lifestyle here—you know, we work a lot. We are on the fly. We eat a lot of unhealthy foods. A lot of the foods that are created even here in Queen's Park, sadly, are the fast food variety. You can get caught up because you're trying to grab a snack here and a nibble here. But for me, I actually decided that I'm going to start running, I'm going to start biking and trying to eat a lot healthier, and grabbing, instead of all the sugary products that I used to—and I still like all those sugary products; I'm certainly no saint—the carrot stick and the celery a whole lot more often nowadays. Even something as simple as more water in your system—my mom was a big believer in that eight-glasses-a-day-of-water principle. I have to say that, in here, I drink a lot of water, but it takes a lot of training for me to actually reach for the glass of water, which we all know, and it's proven, is a good thing.

So I would encourage all those listeners out there and folks here in the House and those at home: Consume more water. Consume more of the vegetables, less of the sugars. Sugar is a big, big piece. I dropped about 20 pounds with this. I didn't eat nearly as many breads and the starchy foods with all the sugars in them. The running and the biking, certainly—and it was interesting how many of my colleagues actually noticed that I'd dropped some weight. It's been challenging since the election to—

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Turn to the side.

Mr. Bill Walker: There you go. Did it work?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I can't see you.

Mr. Bill Walker: You know what? I wasn't turning right around there.

But it's something that, from my past, I really want to promote the physical activity and the ability that you can control your diet.

Not all of us are created the same. I know a lot of my friends when I was growing up said, "Walker, you've got a very good metabolism," because I would eat at one sister's house at about 4:15, I would go to my second sister's house and eat at about 5:10-ish, and my mom would get home from work at about 6 and create a third meal, and I would eat all three of those and, in those days, never put on a pound. I'm not certain I would attempt—well, I might attempt it, but I probably couldn't have the end result.

So again, physical activity is a big piece of this. While I congratulate the minister on bringing this forward—I think there is a lot of merit in it—I don't think we can stop there and just rest, that this is going to be the panacea to fix all things.

I also want to tip my hat to the minister. I was concerned that there was an announcement about this. I wasn't given advance notice. I would have liked to have at least known that there was going to be an announce-

ment coming. I asked her for a briefing very shortly after, and to her credit, she did do that. I had that briefing with her senior staff yesterday and was appreciative of that. It was good to be able to bring a lot of the concerns I had from my constituency and on behalf of my caucus colleagues to her bureaucrats, because there is still time.

I'm going to encourage everyone out there—there will be at least a 45-day period, if this legislation moves through the House, to have comment. I hope, truly, that they will listen to some of the positive, constructive feedback we offer, because I think any piece of legislation can be improved if people are open and willing to listen. I think we need to ensure that all of the people, particularly the stakeholders who are going to be impacted the most, are at that table. One of the key ones I asked about was: "Was the restaurant industry as a whole in that room?" They're going to have the most impact. They're going to be the people who are going to have to adhere to and abide by it, and what we don't want are unintended consequences that are going to put a hardship on them if we don't do this in a thoughtful, methodical manner. We have to make sure we do that.

I'm going to talk a little bit about some cons. Again, it's not really a con, that this piece isn't good, but I think we could go a lot further. The biggest of that is, again, we want some concrete action. A promotion is a step, but it's not going to necessarily make sure it happens. Putting a sign in a restaurant isn't going to necessarily happen. Putting a label on a product isn't necessarily—it's a step in the right direction, it can be helpful, but it's not the only thing and it's not the one thing that's going to move.

I would have liked to have seen a lot more in that bill—and I've been talking about it for the first number of minutes of my speech today—that physical activity should be the number one priority: people moving and being active. That doesn't mean—I think a lot of people get caught up, when you start talking about this, that you have to be a jock; you have to play a sport. No, a walk around the block three times a week or even 10 or 15 minutes a day is a good thing for any one of us out there; swimming 15 or 20 minutes a day, going for a bicycle ride—any physical activity. Vacuuming: My wife will throw that one out at me—and I trust yours would too, Speaker—that we could do that a lot more and help ourselves at the same time and maybe even give her a bit of a break, but I look at it that that's really my way of helping her stay in shape. But we digress. We won't go there too far.

Physical activity is absolutely a path—and I think it was about a week and a half ago that the Premier actually made an announcement of an hour of physical activity a day in school. I applaud her for that. Again, I don't think it's enough. It should be more than an hour. It should be absolutely mandatory, and it shouldn't just be public school. What I saw even in my day was that a lot of people took physical education while they had to, when it was mandatory in public school, and the day they got to high school, they stopped doing that. Coincidentally, they started smoking at a young age and then they stopped the

physical activity. I'm sure there are people in this House who might have done some of those same things. That's a double-whammy then, because you're not as active and you're starting to do the bad habits.

Keeping active for at least one hour a day lowers the risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure—all of those things that we're hearing about and that consume major amounts of our health care system. Again, it's very challenging for me—I work very close to the health care industry—to see people who had smoked or had allowed themselves to become extremely obese and then drain that system very strongly for many, many years trying to reverse all of those.

Sadly, I've lost a sister to lung cancer—a strong, heavy smoker for many years. She started at a very young age and, sadly, she's not with me anymore. I've said in this House before, and I'll say it again: The worst day and a half of my life was to sit in that hospital and physically watch her fade away, see that black, porous, horrible stuff coursing out of her veins and through the systems. So I'm very dedicated when it comes to this, and I'll talk about the other two a little bit more as to smoke-free. That was one of those cases—and she was fairly active, but that smoking was absolutely, at the end of the day, the thing, and no one will ever convince me differently. That was the thing that took her from us at the age of 43.

My dad died of emphysema: again, a heavy smoker. Sadly, my mom passed away from cancer. She wasn't a smoker, but obviously there were some things and probably all that second-hand smoke, I trust, is where a lot of that may have come from because, in her generation, most of her family were smokers, most of it in cars and in an enclosed house. Again, I'm very concerned about those types of things.

Thank goodness, my next sister to me in age has quit smoking. It was losing our sister that actually catapulted her to say—you know what? She tried a couple of times. I can remember my two sisters when I was younger, saying, "If it ever gets to three bucks a pack, I'm going to quit." I think it was about seven or eight bucks a pack and they were still smoking. When my sister passed away from it, gratefully and thankfully for my sister, that was the thing that made her actually stop. She used some nicotine products—NicoDerm or whatever it was. She went to a hypnotist. Whatever it was, it finally allowed her—and thank goodness. She is a cancer survivor, and hopefully she's going to be with us for many more years. Again, she did the 180. She stopped doing the unhealthy things. Now she walks more. Now she's outside a lot more. She's doing the healthy, public things that she can.

Bill 45, sadly, really has no mention or no significant mention of anything about physical activity, and certainly nothing in there from my perspective that is going to make it, if you will, mandatory. I'm not going to be too derogatory in this regard to the government, but they like to bring a lot of things in, saying, "You shall not," or, "You shall." In this case, I would have really loved—and it would have been easier for me—to get everyone on

board to support and say, "Why would you not do that?" We know physical activity makes us healthier. We know it helps our health care system. More importantly, it helps the good health of all of our wonderful citizens.

1700

This bill includes just one recommendation from the panel: a calorie count. It's unclear how the calorie count on menus will be standardized. One of the things I asked yesterday in the briefing was, have you really thought this through? Because what you don't want to do is create chaos. We've certainly had other situations where they've had people come in as inspectors, they go the nth degree of the law and they just keep making it harder and harder for businesses to stay in business. In today's economic climate, with all the people unemployed, we can't add any more burdens to business that are going to put more people out of work and create more people needing our public programs and services.

With the minister in the House today, I want to make sure she understands that that's the feedback I'm getting about this bill from my colleagues and from our constituents, who we hear from collectively. It's unclear how, exactly, enforcement by the public health unit inspectors will work. We asked questions about, "Are you going to add more inspectors?" Is that really what the intent is? Is that really where we want to put our time, energy and resources? Or is it actually in programs that will ensure that kids and adults are getting that type of daily activity they need, which can be much more beneficial than someone in a uniform going out and trying to—because that just puts a negative spin on a lot of the things that are sometimes unintended consequences by government, which for all the right reasons wants to do this. But inspection isn't necessarily the way we want—there are proactive ways that we can get people to be more active. That will have a much bigger degree of success at the end of the day.

I've asked the minister's staff to provide us with a list to ensure that all of the right stakeholders are in the room and have their ability to speak. I've asked for a list of who they consulted on this bill specifically. I'm going to say it again today: There will be at least a 45-day period after the bill gets through the process here at Queen's Park to be able to give your feedback. I encourage every single person out there—individuals, businesses, associations—to definitely wade in on this bill on all three components.

Again, the ministry can't say how burdensome this effort will be. If we're changing menus, whether it's a small business or a large business, a good thing I think, particularly in rural Ontario, because we have a lot of small mom-and-pop types of businesses, is that you have to have 20 locations before this is really going to impact you; so that's good. But for those businesses above that, just a change of one item on that label—do you have to pull everything off the shelf? Do you have to take it back to the redistribution centre to do that? Who's paying to have that label changed and moved? You certainly don't want an inspector to come, giving a fine or going down

that path to a shop owner if a label has just changed in the last little bit. So I wanted to hear the details of what is that reality, because then that takes away the anxiety, particularly from the business community, but also from the consumer.

You're going to have people out there—I'll call them zealots—who really want to push this and say, "Hey, that one's out of date," and it's a day later. Well, that company can't respond if it's across Canada with a product. So there needs to be common sense built in to ensure the focus doesn't become the inspection and the enforcement as opposed to the intended consequence of better and healthier people.

I'm going to wrap this little portion of schedule 1 up. The Ministry of Health says that it wants to copy Obamacare's calorie warnings. Again, right intent; I'm not certain that following Obama is always the right way. There are a lot of things going on with Obama right now that may not have worked out the way he started down the path for. I just think we always have to be cautious whenever I hear, "We're following an Obama idea." Let's follow the ideas that come from the people at the front of the lines here in Ontario, who actually have the ideas that can make our province the best it can be.

Restaurants are already doing their own menu labeling. In fact, as many as 60% have voluntarily brought in calorie stickers. That's a good thing. I just want to again make sure that where we're putting resources is the right place, and what the real end benefit is going to be.

US public health researchers are finding that the calorie sticker policy is changing consumer behaviour. Americans are actually consuming more calories than before; again, let's watch for unintended consequences. Let's learn from some of those examples when that's the case. If there are challenges that they've done, let's learn from them before we repeat that mistake and have to back up and make it a double challenge for all those people.

The American Journal of Public Health stated: "Posting calorie benchmarks had no direct impact, nor did it moderate the impact of calorie labels on food purchases." I'm sure there are some people who are going to say it's wonderful; there are some people who are going to say it's not so wonderful. Let's really take the thought process to the stakeholders, to all the people who are going to be impacted and ensure we know what we're doing before we go gung-ho.

I'll now change, if I can, to schedule 2, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. The key summary of that is to ban the sale of flavoured and menthol tobacco in Ontario, hike maximum fines for offences to be the highest in Canada, and allow public health inspectors to seize illegal smokes.

Again, I'm doing the pros and cons. I always try, when I come to the House, to be balanced. I want to look at both sides of an issue, and then we'll make the informed choice. We need to respect and appreciate both sides. There will always be two sides to any issue, and certainly from my perspective and the PC caucus per-

spective, there's always the ability to learn from others, there's always an ability to seek input and truly listen, and there is no one who has a corner market on the smartest way to do things. Sometimes there is legislation brought in this way that implies that one party knows better: "We're going to tell you this, and you're going to agree with us, and we're just going to steamroll it."

I'm not going to get into the time allocation bills, but in a couple of those cases, that certainly seemed to be what was happening, that they bring in a bill—I mean, it's incredulous. The one was the transparency and accountability act, which says, "We want to be more open and accountable, but we're going to shut down and time-allocate debate on that bill." I'm not really certain how that works. You would hope that they would want to have the most open and accountable process in place; time-allocating it is certainly not there.

A pro, Mr. Speaker: There is clear, undeniable scientific proof that tobacco products cause cancer and other disease. As I said earlier, certainly my sister is a prime example. That vision, sadly, will never leave my head, and if there's anything in this world that I can do to prevent one person from having to go through what I saw her do, particularly that generation of pages in front of you, my nephews and nieces, my friends' children, anyone out there—it just is a place that you don't ever want to be, in a hospital room watching what I had to watch. That will never, ever leave my mind.

When there's legislation like this, certainly I think we all have our due diligence to support it. Yes, people can make their own choices, but I'll tell you, if they could witness what I witnessed, I'm not certain how anybody could go out and do that. And I say to my boys, I can't believe you would ever even think of going out and spending \$8 or \$10 or \$12 on a product that you know at some point is going to kill you. It baffles me, and that money that you would spend you could put into so many other good things for society, those things that could bring you personal enjoyment or help others. Donate that money to charity so that it's a better world for all. Again, a little message to the folks out there: If you are smoking, try to find a way to quit. To you young folks: Please never, ever even attempt it. That's why some of this legislation is in front of us today.

Marketing of any kind of tobacco or tobacco-related products to youth is shown to encourage youth to start this unhealthy habit, so it's one of the discussions that have been had, even with these e-cigarettes. You know, the same motion is paralyzed. It's one of those things—I don't know if there's scientific proof that says it absolutely happens, but it's like anything. A role model is a role model is a role model, and if you're seeing that and it's acceptable, and they just connote—because someone at a young age may not know whether it's a cigarette or an e-cigarette and any difference. They're just watching. And a lot of people start smoking because of peer pressure, that it's cool to do: "If everybody else is out there, if mom and dad are doing it, grandpa and grandma are doing it, then why wouldn't I be able to do it?" Again, I can see why we want to take this approach.

We certainly support efforts to prevent minors from purchasing tobacco and tobacco-related products, absolutely. I'm adamant: There should never be leniency. Anyone who is ever caught selling to a minor, to a youth, should have the most stringent enforcement and fines given to them, with no ability to ever appeal that. It's just one of those things. That is Bill Walker's personal belief, and I'll leave it at that.

Cons: Again, let's have the discussion, let's have the debate to ensure that where we can use science, which is the best way to do things and ensure that we know that it's fact we're talking about and not just emotion—these can definitely be very emotional topics that we're talking about, and we want to ensure that it's not a politically motivated decision or an emotional decision. We want to ensure, when it's about health care, that it's science-based and we're ensuring that that's fact that we're using.

I've heard from some people that they're challenging it, and it's a fair challenge: Where is the evidence on menthol tobacco? The best available scientific evidence currently does not show that menthol cigarettes are more harmful than non-menthol cigarettes. Again, let's make sure we have the jury out. Let's make sure we monitor it. Some would say it's precautionary, and that's kind of a buzzword that's getting used a lot these days, and certainly—as I alluded to earlier, I'm a health recreation practitioner by trade—I'm pretty much on the precautionary tale.

I think you also, again, cannot allow us to get into a nanny state if there isn't evidence that's showing it. If that's the case, then maybe what we should be doing is saying to the minister, let's have a two- or three-year phase-in period of when this is to ensure that it's not, because if we can't prove that it's actually producing some ills, then we have to at least give that side of the argument the ability to prove their side of it. For this exact reason, Brazil is the only country in the world to have implemented a ban on menthol cigarettes. So there's still lots of jury out; there's still lots of testing. It's one of those things again, sadly, that is there, and it would be great if we knew one way or the other.

1710

I think what my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk was trying to say this morning about the banning of neonics is that it is, again, a bit of a political—a bit knee-jerk. We're not sitting down and really actually waiting until the science is in and making sure, unequivocally, that science is moving in that direction. We're concerned about that. We want to make sure that any of these decisions, when it's relating to health care, are about facts, science, and that it's going to be in the best interests of all people.

The US Food and Drug Administration has studied this option, but determined that "menthol cigarettes did not increase the risk of disease compared with smoking" cigarettes not flavoured with menthol. While it banned flavoured cigarettes, it actually granted menthol an exemption under the law. Why did they do that? You would assume that a group like the US Food and Drug

Administration has gone through some pretty comprehensive testing, and if not, then that should be challenged by someone. But if some organization that is as renowned as that and has been around forever and puts all of the food products through the tests is saying that, then we, I think, owe due diligence to at least take a look at that and ensure that we know where we're going with it.

Europe, to my knowledge, plans to ban it by 2022. Again, they're obviously looking, saying, "We need to test these things, we need to look at them and we need to ensure that we have an ability to do that, to make sure. We're in uncharted territory for now, and we want to make sure."

Here's what I do know: Menthol is an organic compound that is derived from the peppermint or corn mint plant or that can be created synthetically in a laboratory. It reduces the harshness of cigarette smoke due to its characteristic cooling effects on the mouth and throat. Public health officials have told us that the mint flavour additive entices people to smoke more and that it is especially popular among youth. To them, it's a starter product and contributes to their long-term addiction.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, if it's something like that, then we want to make sure we take action and we look at it. Anything that I think is going to induce or entice a youth to become a smoker of any state, then I am fully aware and prepared to stand up and help support legislation that would limit that or hopefully decrease it completely.

The market share is around 30%, and I'd like to hear input from the public on this specific schedule. Again, I don't know how much, before this bill was actually introduced, the public was ever allowed the opportunity to have a say. Did they go out and do any real testing? Did they do any surveys? Did they do any kind of opportunity? Is there a website that the public could have weighed in on this before they introduced the bill? I get the whole idea that you're introducing it, and maybe that's the strategy, and they'll have a 45-day period, but 45 days for something that's pretty significant may not be enough. Again, I would hope that the minister, if she's receiving a lot of feedback in that 45-day period, would be willing to actually extend that, to allow the ultimate number of people to weigh in on a discussion such as this.

For one reason, this could backfire. I worry that unreasonable demands will only drive people to the black market. In this case, it may drive smokers to cheap, illegal cigarettes, and that concerns me. Mr. Speaker, you're hearing, whether it be in this House, whether it be out in the media, whether it be out in your community, that there are illegal smoke shacks all over. The price can range from \$4 to \$8, is what I'm hearing, for 200 cigarettes, so we have to be cautious that again an expected outcome could result in an unintended consequence that we actually drive more people, both youth and adults, into smoking illegal cigarettes. If you can buy a bag of 200 for \$4 or \$8, as opposed to a package of cigarettes, which I trust is about \$24—I'm not really certain; I've

never been a smoker—for \$8 or \$10, that concerns me, because for a lot of people, money talks. They're going to go and buy it. If a young person has four or five friends around and they've got 200 cigarettes in a bag that they've paid \$8 for, they'll hand them out like candy. Speaker, that's not what we want to have happen.

The numbers show to me that Ontario has the worst contraband tobacco problem in Canada: One in three are illegal smokes. It's reasonable to expect that this ban may make this problem worse by driving sales to the illegal market, to a tune of 300 million more cigarettes underground every year. A larger contraband market just means better-funded gangs, more health care issues that we're going to have to deal with as taxpayers—and when I was in the briefing yesterday, it wasn't lost on me, when I asked the question about contraband, very quickly the senior bureaucrats in the room said, “This isn't really us. This is a finance issue.” I suggested to them that I get why technically that may be the case, because it is about taxation, but the general public thinks of smoking and illegal cigarettes as a health issue. What I encourage them to do is to work very collaboratively with finance to find a way to put some actual solid action in on this issue.

We have to look at this in a two-pronged thought process. One is, what is the cost of providing health care if more people—300 million more cigarettes are on the open market to our youth, to those who already smoke, and, more concerning, those youth and those who aren't already smoking who may pick up such a habit that is very, very, very difficult to stop.

We also have to look at it from the financial loss side of the equation. If there are that many illegal contraband cigarettes, then we're not getting the taxation revenue that we would through the regular process of buying cigarettes. I really don't want people to buy cigarettes, but it is, in fact, one of those realities, that there's a lot of money generated. We're missing out on a lot of revenue and what could that revenue be doing for our health care system, our schools—in my case, as critic of community and social services and long-term-care homes, what could that be doing for those people, truly the needy on the front lines, if we had that type of revenue?

I just want to really take a look. I was quite shocked, Minister, that there was nothing in there concrete about contraband. We need to see action from your government. This isn't a new problem.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's finance. It's a finance issue.

Mr. Bill Walker: You can keep flipping back to finance. What I would suggest to those members on the opposite side who are saying it's finance—I implore you, out of your civic responsibility, go to your finance minister and get him to take some concrete action tomorrow on contraband. It's something that's been there a long time. They've been in government for 11 years, Mr. Speaker. These illegal shacks didn't just pop up yesterday. It's not a new phenomenon, so why are they continually not taking action? When we bring something like this up, they point backwards to someone else's issue. Take some

accountability, take some responsibility. Do the right thing and ensure that the health of our children and our residents is the absolute priority of your government.

I'm going to move on now to schedule 3. I have a fair bit to cover on this. I have to say, of the three schedules—and with the minister in the House—this has been the most controversial. The other two were pretty easy sells for most people, to be able to get them onside and get to see where the thought process was. This one, schedule 3, is the Electronic Cigarette Acts, 2014. Again, the brief summary: to ban and restrict the sale, promotion and use of e-cigarettes the same way as tobacco.

Again, I'm going to follow a very similar process. I'm going to talk about pros and cons and try to just engage people's thought processes to ensure we're looking at this from a very balanced viewpoint. I have certainly heard from both sides of the issue.

The pros: It's easy to agree we need to limit the exposure of our young people to tobacco products. This is because it is easy to argue tobacco use costs us billions in health dollars. I can limit that just to youth, but as I've said throughout this whole statement today, everyone in society, whether you're a youth, whether you're a senior, whether you're middle-aged, anyone smoking, you are costing yourself and your family hardship in some way at the end of the day because there's a lot of money being spent to treat those people who have been lifelong smokers, regardless of whether it's a right and a privilege to do that or not. At the end of the day, we also have to have a conscience to say, what are my actions doing for my fellow man and woman? What am I doing that actually is taking and detracting away from their society?

But that's not really what this schedule is about. It's about curbing access to nicotine, a chemical derived from the tobacco plant, by banning and restricting access to electronic cigarettes the same way as tobacco cigarettes. Let's get something straight: An e-cigarette is not, at this point, a tobacco product. There's nothing that says it is. There's nothing from nicotine, that I'm made aware of, in those cartridges. It doesn't mean there couldn't be other people coming up with a pretty quick scheme to put those cartridges in, but we just want to clarify that at this current point it is not, to the best of my knowledge and the people who have done the research, a tobacco product.

E-cigarettes are products that deliver a nicotine-containing aerosol commonly called vapour. A colleague across the floor referenced a shop in his riding that actually has “vapour” right in the title of the storefront. This aerosol is created by heating a solution typically made up of propylene glycol or glycerol or glycerin. According to public health research, a puff of e-cigarette with the highest nicotine content contains 20% of the nicotine contained in the puff of a conventional cigarette. Again, it's a fifth, which is a good step in the right direction. The hope would be that there would be none, because we all know that nicotine is the thing that creates the issue down the road. It is, in fact, seen as a healthier alternative to tobacco smoking, useful for quitting smok-

ing and reducing cigarette consumption, and as a way to circumvent smoke-free laws by enabling users to smoke anywhere.

I've certainly had feedback. I don't know, Speaker, if you have or any of my colleagues in any of the three parties have heard that. I have received some emails and some phone calls saying, "What are you doing? This is the thing that's helping me to stop smoking. It's the one thing that I've actually tried that's working for me. What are you going to do banning that?" I want to make clear—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're not banning them.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We're not banning them.

Mr. Bill Walker: Just allow me—work with me here.

However—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

1720

Mr. Bill Walker: However, in speaking with the minister's staff yesterday, I was made aware that they're not banning it. So easy, people. Relax over there.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm skinnier. That's right.

So what it will do at some point is, you cannot smoke e-cigarettes anywhere you can't smoke conventional cigarettes.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: What's wrong with that?

Mr. Bill Walker: I didn't say there was anything wrong. I'm doing the pros and cons. Relax over there. It's my hour, not yours.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: At least we're paying attention to you.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm glad to see that, actually. Thank you, Minister. Thank you.

I think the concern is, people who don't want to see this typically saw the original smoking ban, where you couldn't smoke in certain places, like your car; you couldn't smoke in public restaurants; you couldn't then smoke on places like patios—those members of the community who had patios were originally told, "If you build a patio, you can have your patrons go out there and smoke." Then you came along and said, "No, no, no, you're not even going to be allowed to smoke on those." They're saying, "Well, I just spent \$20,000" or whatever the number was. These people very quickly go to that thought process, that you're going to go to an immediate ban.

I think, again, Minister, obviously there needs to be some promotion put out. People are jumping very quickly. Don't shoot the messenger here; I'm just telling you. What I do is my job; I listen to my constituents, who come to me and say, "Why are you doing this? Why are you banning them?" So I'm clarifying wherever I can, but I think there's work to be done, obviously—because they're already coming to me with that—to let people know that it is not a ban at this point.

Of course, their second question is, "Well, then it's only a matter of time. Once they get this one through the door, they'll ban everywhere, anywhere smoking." I'll

leave that up to the judgment of each you whether that's right or wrong. I certainly have my own views.

But it is something that I think we have to give some thought to, because for those people who are, I think we need to make sure we understand that it's something that is a useful tool. For those people, there is some validity. If that's going to help them get off smoking, period, we need to not totally shut it down, because that might be the only thing that actually stops them from becoming a long-term smoker.

They're promoted under the claims that they are healthier, cheaper and cleaner than cigarettes, as they do not produce second-hand smoke, can be smoked anywhere and are sexier than nicotine replacement therapy. That is not my word, Mr. Speaker; that was in the note that obviously was prepared for my benefit. I will not be trying to get sexier by having an e-cigarette. I can assure all of you that I need a lot more help than an e-cigarette to get me anywhere.

No comment required on that one, by the way. I just wanted to see if you're still listening.

To my knowledge, the makers of e-cigarettes are amenable to the idea that this product should not be sold to people under 19 years of age. I think that's unequivocal. I don't think anyone is going to argue that. I hope the youth in our crowd today and those listening at home—there can be no tolerance whatsoever for anything that is going to even minimally entice a young person to try smoking.

I want to share a little personal story on this. I'm actually quite a bit younger than most of my siblings. I started with five siblings, and I've sadly shared with you that I lost one. But all five of my siblings, with the exception of my oldest sister, were smokers. My two older brothers, when I was about six years old—I don't know why they did this, but they decided they were going to give me a cigarette. I took a couple of puffs and was immediately ill. They thought that was a real giggle with all their friends around. About two, three or five minutes later, they decided to give me a cigar. I had a couple of puffs and I got even more green than these chairs that we comfortably reside in every day. They had their giggle and blah, blah, blah. About two minutes later, they gave me a pipe, and I did it.

I have to say, as it was the meanest, cruelest thing that my brothers ever did to me, or at least up there in the numbers, it was extremely effective; because the only other time in my life I have ever tried to even think about a cigarette or a cigar was when my best friend, Don Richardson, and his wife, Susie, had my godchild, Robin. Of course, back in that day, it was still pretty customary that people would have cigars. They were just those little wine-tipped cigarillo cigars. I again thought, "Well, I'm going to do this in honour of my buddy and my new goddaughter." I took my two puffs and got violently ill. That's the extent of my smoking career.

When I had my two boys, Zach and Ben, I really laboured with, would I be as mean as my brothers? Because it was pretty effective, and I have never been a

smoker nor will I ever be a smoker, but I don't know that I could be mean enough to do it to them. Sometimes I wonder if I maybe should have, because I think they are still part of that generation where there's a lot of enticement to become smokers.

It's why, in this situation here, we have to look at all different things. If an e-cigarette is going to be the thing that actually at some point promotes them to become a smoker, then I'm not going to want to support that very strongly.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Did you inhale?

Mr. Bill Walker: Not a whole lot, I've got to tell you, and I still got sick. So I can't imagine doing the inhaling of anything, and I certainly haven't inhaled—where you're going there, opposite member—with anything illegal. Let's put it that way—ever. I may be the only person of my age to ever be able to say that. On a stack of Bibles I swear, and that is the God's honest truth.

The cons: I fear about the stigma this specific schedule creates around people who are genuinely using this tobacco-free product to fight a tobacco addiction. I know senior citizens, many of them Legion members, who have come to me—and they were very vocal the last time around when there was a ban on smoking. They fought for this country, the liberty and rights and freedoms we enjoy. A lot of those people—again, I go to Remembrance Day services in a lot of the schools, and what really captivates me is that in most of those little clips, probably 90% of the soldiers, men and women of service, are actually smoking. In a lot of the old movies from back in that day they are smoking. I think we have to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I was in some of those movies.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Yakabuski, you couldn't have been. You're too young.

We have to, again, give some thought to those Legion members who will attest to its efficacy. Why should we deny them the little pleasure of an e-cigarette, particularly when it isn't proven that there are any harmful health effects? To the minister and to those who will be reviewing all of the comments, that's something we have to take into consideration. Is there an exemption available for those people if we can't prove that it's actually a harmful carcinogen?

The Liberal government has made people who like plastic bags, junk food and who like the pleasure of e-cigarettes social pariahs. Again, we sometimes use a label, a 30-second sound bite, to try to get people who never read the rest of the article to just say, "Oh, this is wonderful. We have to jump on it," without reading the detail and understanding that there may be some unintended consequences. There may be some things inadvertently that are going to deprive people of something they actually have the right to do. If it's not impacting their health or someone's health around them, then I think we have to look at that.

That leads me to this nanny state mentality. Again, I'm trying to stay out of the weeds in regard to partisanship today, but there are a lot of things that have been enacted by a Liberal government in the recent past that

say, "We know better than you. You shall or you shall not do this." I think that's what really raised the ire of a lot of people who have been giving me feedback: "I should be able to make my own choices. I should be able to do this. I should be able to do that." To a degree, I share a lot of those same concerns. When it's in the case of cigarettes, if you're doing it in the proximity of someone else where you could actually impact their health, I'm different from that. I do think we have to actually—because people may choose to do it, but they have to have respect for those people around them.

The challenge with these is that there is no science to truly suggest that this is a health issue. I think until we do that, we've got to really tread cautiously on this.

The nanny state mentality doesn't imply to injection sites or the fact that nicotine replacement products are currently subsidized by the government. Most importantly, I question why the province would rush this through at the same time it is calling on the federal government to launch a Health Canada study into e-cigs.

I'm going to just share another example to try to exemplify this. It's a little bit like wind turbines. The government came out and decreed, "We're going to put these things up. They're going to save the world. They're going to create 300,000 jobs." I don't even think the 40,000 that they use now as their number is anywhere accurate. They came in and said, "You will." They took away the democratic right of municipalities, those closest to the people, elected in a municipality, to have a say whether they want those. And yet, there aren't studies out there that unequivocally prove there's no harm done to people in Ontario, to our great province. In this case, they're saying, "Sorry about your luck. We're just going to do it because we think it's going to happen." In that case, they came out and did exactly the opposite and said, "Too bad. We don't really care whether there's a study."

Again, we're seeing the same thing. Why would they not have learned from that? It's created a lot of acrimony across our province. This could do the same thing. Why would they have not waited, at least for this portion? The first two schedules—certainly, go ahead, but they could have left this off until they had the study from Health Canada.

I'm just going to reference at this point, Mr. Speaker—this is the Standing Committee on Health of the House of Commons. Mr. Ben Lobb, a good colleague from Huron-Bruce and the Conservative Party, is Chair of this committee. I'm just going to take a few extra excerpts out of here. Mr. Milan Khara, clinical director of the Vancouver General Hospital smoking cessation clinic, was the speaker in this case. I'm just going to quote:

"I am a physician, I work at Vancouver General Hospital, and I spend my clinical time in the smoking cessation clinic. Essentially, I eyeball people who want to quit smoking and help them in their quit journey using evidence-based treatment.

"I'm here to speak about electronic cigarettes. The first thing I'd like to do is just preface any comments I

have by saying that clearly this is a highly contentious area, with great polarization and dispute among people within the public health community and people within the tobacco control community. The areas of contention really span the whole issue, but they probably focus on a couple of main areas. The first is whether these products are safe, or indeed safer than traditional cigarettes. The second is whether these products have utility as a cessation device. Do these products actually help people to quit smoking? Third, there is some dispute over the harm that may or may not be caused to those who are secondarily exposed to vapour. There is also some concern around youth uptake and so-called renormalization of smoking behaviour ...

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"In addition to the unknown effects on health, we have concerns over the normalization of smoking. In a survey of youth, in 2012, researchers found that about one in five respondents between the ages of 16 and 30 had used an e-cigarette, and four out of five of the respondents who smoked felt that e-cigarettes would allow them to smoke in places where it is not allowed, such as the workplace. This has the potential to increase a person's nicotine consumption.

"It's well known that most adult smokers began smoking before the age of 18; relatively few people will start smoking and become regular smokers after this age. Increasing the attractiveness of vaping increases the risk of more Canadians becoming regular smokers. This is a serious threat to the tremendous progress that's been made in Canada in reducing the number of smokers.

"Part of our 2001 position statement outlines the importance of preventing people from starting to smoke. We see the availability of e-cigarettes as a threat to the prevention of smoking initiation by normalizing smoking and presenting it as a safe way to deliver nicotine.

"There is no clear answer as to whether e-cigarettes help people quit smoking. We need further research into what role e-cigarettes play in smoking cessation, if any.

"E-cigarette products are currently not regulated and are not required to meet Health Canada standards for pharmaceutical products or natural health products. Until we know more about their safety and effectiveness, and until such time as they are available as regulated health products, we do not think pharmacists and other health care professionals should support their use.

"As part of its Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the World Health Organization published a report on electronic nicotine delivery systems last summer. They provide advice for countries looking to deal with e-cigarettes. There are a number of points made in the report that this committee should seriously consider for implementation in Canada.

"They include, first, prohibiting e-cigarette manufacturers from selling and promoting e-cigarettes as a way to quit smoking. E-cigarette manufacturers should be required to comply with the same stringent criteria as other manufacturers of smoking cessation aids before being allowed to make such claims.

"Second, we should treat e-cigarettes the same as cigarettes in terms of bans on their use in public spaces. This will help send the message that public use of any form of nicotine-containing cigarettes is not acceptable.

"Third, do not allow sponsorship, advertising, or promotion of e-cigarettes, in the same way that this is not allowed for tobacco products.

"Last, restrict the sale of e-cigarettes in the same way as tobacco, to prevent uptake by minors."

Again, I'm just going to recap. Here's yet another time that the government—you know, the federal government is actually doing a study that might be conclusive and might be able to share with us whether, "Yes, it's a good thing," or, "No, it's not; it should be restricted," but they're rushing this to market ahead of that. I'm sure we'll turn around at some point and blame the federal government because they haven't done it quickly enough. But we could certainly ensure that that would happen.

The cons—again, this is feedback I received. This isn't just Bill Walker dreaming these things up; it's actual feedback that I received. I fear about the stigma the specific schedule creates around people who are genuinely using this tobacco-free product to fight a tobacco addiction. So there is some validity.

I know of senior citizens, as I said earlier, many Legion members who will attest that they need and want this, and, "Until you can prove there is something doing damage to me," they want it. So we have to be very cautious.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Your member is really trying hard over here. Thanks.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to read now, again—this is information that I've received back from constituents. I received this Monday, December 1:

"Hello,

"We were just in Ottawa this week as a witness for HESA meeting No. 43 on e-cigarettes, now the Premier of Ontario and others are pushing for Bill 45 schedule 3 immediately that takes away our freedom as vapers and vendors in Canada.

"This is absolutely draconian"—I'm quoting all of this—"and wrong and we need everyone's help. Vaping has not only saved me from a premature death from cigarettes but also so many other Canadians. I smoked for 13 years, tried everything and was unable to stop a pack a day, felt terrible with constant breathing issues and coughing.

"I have been smoke free for two years now with vaping. I feel like a triathlete and can run for hours with no difficulty breathing, wheezing or coughing. I feel like I am 13 again when I played hockey.

"Vaping works, and we need your help in opposing this radical bill that is going to destroy the biggest health innovation in Canada in the last 50 years, and will force myself and other Canadians back to tobacco cigarettes. We need to act now as they are going in for a second reading on December 1, tomorrow. Please help and bring

this information to the public. We must say no to Bill 45. Thank you to your time and consideration.

"Regards,
"Shawn Wells."

Another letter, dated November 30:

"Thank you for taking a moment from your busy schedule to read my correspondence. I am a member of the Canadian Nurses Association. I have an ethical responsibility to facilitate informed decision-making by presenting credible evidence. I take my code of ethics very seriously and as a result, I am writing to you.

"I came across vaporizers (electronic cigarettes) about a year and a half ago. Since that time, I have researched the science on this technology and, as result of that research, I am of the opinion that vaping is the most revolutionary treatment for the tobacco epidemic plaguing our country. As a nurse, the monetary cost of smoking to the taxpayer (\$20 billion per year) is insignificant compared to the years of suffering incurred from smoking-related diseases. It not only causes suffering for the smoker but their loved ones as well. It is a horrible thing to watch your mother, over months, slowly drowning in her own lung tissue. Smoking is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the world today. It kills over 37,000 Canadians every year, and for every death, 20 suffer from smoking-related diseases such as heart disease, COPD and cancer.

"My concern is that Bill 45 is being pushed through the law-making process very quickly without allowing the voices of Canadians to be heard and without the science on vaping being considered. Smoking is a very serious population health hazard and the people of this country deserve to have all treatments for this epidemic thoroughly and comprehensively investigated.

"Respectfully,
"Kellie Forbes, BScN, RN."

Mr. Speaker, there are two very direct—from the people that we represent. My job is to bring those thought processes. I've tried today to bring a number of different thought processes forward to allow the people listening at home and in the House to look at them. There are definitely two sides, particularly when it comes to e-cigarettes.

I just want to review a couple of key messages. There is no clear answer as to whether e-cigarettes help people quit smoking; again, some people think there is, some people think there isn't. We need to see further research.

Like I said earlier, I think the research has to speak for itself. This could have been one of those ones that, because we can't define it, could have been left off the bill. The other two would have sailed through quickly and we could get those through the process already. We could have done more input. We could have made sure people had a true say on this.

Again, there is the health study from Health Canada to research whether it truly is going to be something that's going to be a detriment to our health. We want to see the results of the federal study into e-cigarettes. Again, the minister could have left this off and said, "We'll wait.

We'll see what that study says, and then I could introduce another bill at that time."

Those people listening at home can certainly feed that back in through the minister's office, through our offices, to ensure that we are actually listening to the people we represent.

As I've said in here unequivocally on a number of cases today, Mr. Speaker, we need to be basing our thoughts on science: the findings in that study into e-cigarette safety, efficacy for harm reduction and cessation, and total impact on public health.

I'm going to just readdress the idea this morning that my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk, with the neonics—there are a lot of different thought processes out there on whether neonics are truly killing bees or not killing bees. I have some people in my riding who are members of the Ontario Beekeepers' Association but don't fully believe that an absolute, outright ban is the way to go. In fact, they've splintered off and started their own bee association because they don't believe that it's that scientific and absolute. I've had farmers come and say, "I moved mine down the road 15 miles, and now I don't have any of the same issues. So is it or isn't it related to the neonics?" I've had some people saying that there are various places in Canada—that some are blaming it on neonics, but there's no science saying it truly is. We have to be very cautious.

Obviously, we know that bees are pollinators and that they certainly play a key role in all of our food supply. But we also have to be very cautious with those groups and organizations out there that are certainly trying to work within the system and find innovative solutions without wiping it out—because I'm told, before the neonics came in, there were much more harmful pesticides and insecticides being used, and we certainly don't want to go back there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): On a point of order, the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to compliment the member for staying on track and speaking to the bill, but I think he has wandered off a little bit. Maybe he could just come back and speak towards the bill at hand. I don't think neonicotinoids, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I haven't detected that myself, but I'll certainly keep an eye on it. Thanks so much.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I'm really trying to do is draw a parallel: that you need to use science. Both of the issues that I'm talking about are about health care. It's about the health of our citizens. That's why we're here. It's our absolute fundamental priority for all of us in this room. I just want to make sure that what we're doing at all times is using science as our guideline. We're not allowing politics into play. We're not allowing partisan thought processes into play. We're not allowing emotion to interfere. In these cases, we have to rely on the science before we make a

decision that may actually be a wrong decision that we have to retract at some point down the road.

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In my opening comments I talked about the need for us to really listen to people to ensure that we're doing the right things. I shared with you that there were three different components of this bill, and I'm just going to review a little bit of that again.

The menu labelling, I think, generally, is something that most people can support, they can understand. If they look at a label—what's your riding again, Mr. Nicholls?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Chatham—Kent—Essex.

Mr. Bill Walker: The member for Chatham—Kent—Essex, I think, referred to going into a restaurant and looking in the mirror, but I think he meant at the label, and I think that certainly made an impact on him. He made a healthier choice and I'm glad of it, because I want him to serve in this House with me for a long time, as I do the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry—quite a mouthful—and the member from Nipissing—Pembroke.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Pembroke—Renfrew? He should know that, because he seems to talk with the Speaker almost daily and his riding does come up. Do you need another opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to talk to him?

I want to ensure that we're doing things about health care with science, that we're making decisions that are going to benefit all of us.

Again, I wanted to see some things in there more specifically about physical activity. I wanted to see concrete action on child obesity because I believe that's really where we need to focus. We need to ensure that we're not allowing kids to get into bad habits and eating unhealthy products, becoming obese and then spending inordinate amounts of money to try to bring them back to become healthy citizens.

What we need to do is be proactive and preventative. We need to ensure that kids are getting physical education every day. We need to make sure that they have physical activity every day, and that was one that you had absolutely no concern about me supporting, Minister, because I think it's there for all people if we just want to step into that one. And we definitely have to do more concrete things—a step in the right direction last week, as I mentioned, by the Premier to introduce it, but let's take it all the way up the ladder. Let's do things.

I would even go as far as looking at things that are going to entice people to become even more active, whether it's a tax credit for people to be able to take a program and get involved—we do it for minor sports, but can we extend that across the spectrum to all ages so that people are actually wanting to stay more active?

We also want to make sure that at the end of the day, we have healthy choices that are there, absolutely; how would anybody argue with that? But we want to make sure that there's clearness for the business community. We want to ensure that we're not putting added burdens. We continually in this House talk every day about the

750,000 people who are unemployed and the rising cost of electricity that is certainly impacting the ability for businesses to stay. We talk about the red tape. We talk about the bureaucracy. We talk about the waste of eHealth, the gas plants, all of those scandals. We could be putting in—businesses could be thriving.

This is one that I don't want to become yet another added burden, that they're going to inadvertently put more people out of work, which puts more strain on the system and fewer taxes to be able to spend on things like health promotion, like our health care, like proper eating choices.

Again, it's a worthy step in the right direction. Promoting healthy choices is a good thing, but I think we could have gone a lot further and I'm going to continue, as one of the critics in the room, to push the minister to ensure that we're looking at things that are going to truly have a huge impact in the end. This is a step. This is a good thing. Again, there's not much we can say too bad about it, but let's make sure we don't put any added burden on those businesspeople who are already struggling out there.

To move back, just a little bit of a review in case some people have joined us late. I just want to make sure that no one goes home without the benefit of hearing what I think are the good parts of this bill or the bad parts.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act—

Ms. Cindy Forster: You're doing a great job, Bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: I think they're asking for more time, Mr. Speaker. I may use part of my time to ask for unanimous consent to go for another half hour or so. I think I can get it all covered by then.

Mr. John Yakubuski: If you're going on, I'm staying.

Mr. Bill Walker: I knew you would.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the banning of the sale of flavoured and menthol tobacco in Ontario: Again, what I want to really reiterate here is that I was really hoping—I think this minister truly wants to make a difference and wants to really tackle the root of the biggest challenges out there. I've already said the physical activity and the obesity; we could have had more concrete things through the use of physical activity.

This one is really right up there as well: We have the worst contraband tobacco problem in Canada. One in three are illegal smokes. I'm fearful that inadvertently some of this legislation may drive people to those illegal smoke shacks. They've had 11 years. They're not new. It's not a new issue. It's getting worse because there's more. I think the number I quoted earlier—this could actually result in 300 million more cigarettes out in the market for our youth and our smokers and for those who may not even be smoking, God forbid, to start, because we're driving it to that underground market. We don't get any revenue out of it.

Again, you can slough this off to the finance minister. I implore you to work with him, push him to put some legislation on this table immediately to address this—not smoke and mirrors, pardon the pun, but we need

something that's concrete. We need to ensure there's something there that's actually going to have an impact and ensure that we are truly getting to the root of these challenges that are out there.

With regard to schedule 3, the Electronic Cigarettes Act, as I say, I think there are some people who are going to think it's great, from the cessation side of things. We haven't proven that it truly is a health impact at this point. We could have waited until the federal government did their study and then not wasted time going back and forth or to and fro. We could have said, "Here's the science."

We need to ensure that we have the science, like I said earlier. I used as an example, just to draw people's attention to it, the neonics: They did not use science. They didn't wait for the scientific proof. And what's going to happen? What are the inadvertent consequences, the unintended consequences that we may feel as a result of that?

Mr. Speaker, I will commend the minister, a new minister, in fact, for bringing this piece of legislation. I would have preferred that she used schedules 1 and 2, which I think everyone in this House could have supported. We would have had it through. It would have been enacted and would have actually started to make a difference for people tomorrow. I'm not certain the e-cigarette was one that we really had to combine with that. They're doing a lot of these types of bills, where they're bundling a bunch of things. I'm hopeful that wasn't for political reasons or to try to wedge anyone in this room to say, "I won't vote for it," and then use that for partisan political reasons.

I want this to be about people's health. I particularly want it to be about our youth and the future of our province. I want to ensure that we're always doing things in a balanced, methodical manner that ensures that the health of Ontarians is our absolute priority.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, I was hoping for 20 minutes on this bill, but I'm only going to get two.

If the member from Nickel Belt were here to do her lead, I think she would zone in on what this bill doesn't have. It doesn't have sodium labelling, a very important thing in health issues in this province. I wonder why the government is not legislating sodium labelling. We have 10,000 people in this province on dialysis and probably hundreds of thousands who are being monitored for the possibility of needing to go on dialysis. We all know that sodium intake increases blood pressure, and increases in blood pressure lead to kidney disease, which leads to people having to go on dialysis. So I think the government should reconsider that, and I know we'll be putting forth amendments.

It also impacts my critic portfolio. We have hundreds of thousands of people using food banks here in the province of Ontario, living on processed and canned foods. The Canadian Medical Association says that one of the ways to reduce heart attacks, strokes, high blood

pressure and eventually kidney disease is for people to have fresh fruits and vegetables, which doesn't happen for the hundreds of thousands of people who are on social assistance, ODSP, and the working poor in this province.

I would implore the government to revisit the issue of sodium labelling in restaurants and anywhere else where labelling will occur under this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The minister—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Long-term care and wellness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't know how I can make it without you. Thanks so much.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to commend the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his very thoughtful and well-researched comments. I can see you've put in a lot of effort to study the issue, and I really, really appreciate the feedback.

I also want to thank the member from Welland for her comments.

I only have two minutes to respond to a half-an-hour piece. I'm going to zone in on two things. One is, I repeatedly heard, "Why don't you wait for the federal government?" My point is, if we were waiting for the federal government, we'd still be smoking cigarettes inside this Legislature. There's a role for the province, and we've always shown leadership, so we've moved on it.

The second thing: I want to tell your constituents who keep saying, "Well, vaping is helping me get off smoking," that there is absolutely nothing in our legislation that stops people from continuing to move from their cigarettes to their electronic cigarettes if they so wish, and that is really critical. That's why we say it's balance. It continues to be legal in Ontario for adults to vape. All we're saying is, let's keep the kids away. If we had known everything we know about cigarettes today, wouldn't we wish that we had had a smoke-free Ontario 30 years ago? It probably would have saved your mom's ill health that you reference, as well as perhaps your sister's life.

All we are saying is, we're managing that risk. We don't know how good or bad these electronic cigarettes are, so let's keep the non-vapors away from it. That's what this is based on. It's about negotiating different risks, and that's how we landed on this. I hope that gives you some comfort, and again, I thank everybody in the Legislature for this robust debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's a pleasure to stand in this Legislature.

To my counterpart from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, he went on for an hour, but he only did that because he wanted to get his word count up. But, in all seriousness—we do have fun on this side, as I'm sure the others have fun at others' expense on the other side.

However, on a more serious note, I talked earlier about the importance of calorie counts, and I recall—I

mentioned this earlier—how in fact I went to one of those fast-food restaurants at a point in time where I was watching my weight and wanting to improve my own personal health. I read through, and they had the calories of everything listed. I was surprised, as the minister had once mentioned earlier in her leadoff, how certain food items, even drinks, contain such high calories. It really caused me to sit up and take notice and forced me to change my mind on several different items that I was going to have. I don't think there are many calories in a black coffee, and that's what I ended up getting that time.

But we look at the health of our young people today, and I'm very concerned about it. I really think there are a number of things that we can do. Parents can do the best they can in terms of leading by example with regard to proper food selection for their children. Teachers in schools can do their best as well, and we can maybe try to legislate—of course, then kids, even though they can't get it in a cafeteria, will suddenly stop going to the cafeteria and go down the street where they can get that quick burger.

I think, too, that physical activity is critical, and I really think that perhaps the government, in their wisdom, should look at putting back into the school curriculum four credits so that students can become more physically active and therefore reduce obesity as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise in this House, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to respond to some of the comments that were made by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I want to congratulate the member on a speech that really talked about the personal experiences that he brings to this portfolio and also this issue—this issue of creating a smoke-free province where cancer deaths are reduced.

The member had the personal experience of seeing family members close to him go through that horrible cancer journey, and this is one very specific thing that we can do, as the government of Ontario, to help reduce those experiences, to help prevent other families from going through those same tragedies.

I do want to quote from the *Toronto Star* just a couple of weeks ago. They wrote, "The Liberal bill is inspired by NDP MPP France Gélinas, who has been pushing for a ban on flavoured tobacco since 2008." It's taken some time to reach this point where we are now all talking and seeming to agree about the importance of moving forward on that ban to prevent young people from taking up the habit of smoking and to prevent those future cancer deaths.

But as my colleague the member for Welland pointed out, there's still a lot more we need to do. The calorie labelling provisions that are included in this bill do not include sodium content, which, as we know, is a major

contributor to high blood pressure and eventual stroke and heart attack. That needs to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has two minutes.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You sure you don't want to give me that extra 10, eh?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank my colleague from Welland, who's a nurse. She certainly makes a good point with regard to sodium. I would remind people that starches and sugars are equally as bad, so try to cut those out of your diet and we'll all be better off.

The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex and the calorie counts: I want to just encourage you to continue to look in the mirror and keep up the good fight.

The minister from long-term care and wellness, I want you to know, as your critic, the only reason—and my other critic, as well: I only do that to try to make you better, more effective. More importantly, the people of Ontario will be the beneficiary of me being a good, objective critic and holding you to the best game that you can bring to the table.

I just can't go past—you made a comment in regard to the federal government and we could have been waiting. I'd like you to watch the federal government on balancing the budget before you bankrupt our province, so there's a trade-off.

Hon. Liz Sandals: You were doing so well.

Mr. Bill Walker: I've got to keep you honest. I don't want you to get too comfortable over there.

The member from London West: Thank you very much. It is very much a personal thing—not only the side of losing my sister and the ills of my mom and my other sister. I don't want to see anybody go through that, if we can prevent it, and it is preventable. Just do the right thing when it comes to smoking; just say no.

To you young folks, the pages that we've had the privilege to serve with for the last number of weeks, to those looking at home and to those parents and grandparents: Do everything in your power you can to get people to not smoke—please just say no every single time. Tell your friends, if they think about it: "Just say no; make the right decision." To the adults out there: If you do smoke today, do whatever you can to stop doing that. It's in your best interests; it's in the best interests of the other people around.

I want to just, as my recreation guide that never leaves me, say this: Do 30 minutes of physical activity every day, eat healthy, make the proper choices, get proper sleep, and at the end of the day, you'll be helping yourself and everyone around you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
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Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
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Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
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Vacant	Sudbury	

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Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim



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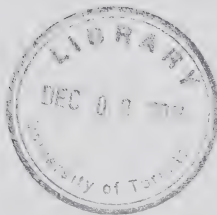
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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 4 December 2014

Jeudi 4 décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 décembre 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Mr. Chan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 49, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Davenport.

Today is quite a day for me, beginning this debate. Previously, this was a bill that was introduced by the MPP from Don Valley East. The former minister introduced a very similar bill, but that was not able to pass because of the election. I just want to thank him for his wonderful work. He did tremendous work and lots of preparation—basically made my life a bit easier.

Immigration is a big file in my ministry. It's quite dear to me because I am a first-generation immigrant. Immigration is a file of great significance. People say Ontario is a land of immigrants; in fact, it is. People say Ontario is filled by migrants; in fact, it is. As remarked on by our Premier many, many times, other than the aboriginal people, we are all migrants who came to this great land at one point in time; in fact, we are.

As recently as this Monday, Speaker, I had a conversation with the consul general of Korea; as a matter of fact, he was here yesterday sitting in the Speaker's gallery. He told me that he was so amazed by the fact that more than half the population of Toronto were not born in Toronto; they were born outside of Toronto. He was very amazed by the fact that we came from more than 200 countries, speaking more than 130 languages. We are truly the face of the world.

Leaving one's hometown, travelling afar, some perhaps thousands and thousands of kilometres to a new land, is

not a light-hearted decision; it's difficult. Needless to say, there are many challenges, obstacles, difficulties, barriers—you name it.

Over the years, we have heard many immigrant stories—many. Some of them may be good; some are bad; some can be ugly. Just like the western movie with Clint Eastwood: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. But one thing is for sure: There are never-ending immigrant stories. I would say that every immigrant has his or her own story. Being a first-generation immigrant, I too have a story to tell. I came here quite a while ago. I came here 45 years ago now. I came in September, 1969, in the fall. I was a young man, full of energy, perhaps full of great expectation.

Mr. Han Dong: You're still young.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for saying that, that I'm still young. I appreciate that.

I landed in the Toronto airport, and at that time I did not have one friend; I did not have one relative. I was picked up by a friend of my father. When I landed in this great land, I encountered a problem. It's quite an interesting problem. My problem was that I could not talk to people, I could not communicate with people, because at that time my English-speaking skills were limited. When I talked to people, they could not understand me; when they talked to me, I could not understand them. I had a problem: I could not talk to people.

So I thought, "Chinatown is always around. Why don't you go and talk to those Canadian Chinese?" But I still had the problem, because I spoke a different dialect. The Chinese community at the time spoke something that I did not understand. So when they talked to me in their Chinese dialect, I would move these; when I talked to them, they would return the favour, do the same thing like this. So I really had a problem. I could not talk to people.

In November 1969, I was lucky enough to find a job. It was, I would say, a perfect job—a bit humbling. I found a job working in a Chinese food takeout restaurant. It's still there; it's still operating. It's at the corner of Martin Grove and Burnhamthorpe in Etobicoke Centre. That's the riding there. It's at the northeast corner of Martin Grove and Burnhamthorpe. The name is Far East Chinese Food. The job was quite simple. I learned the job working in the basement. Speaker, you may like Chinese food, right? Chinese food is famous for those egg rolls. I was the one down in the basement mixing the plum sauce powder with some water in a little cup and putting a lid on it so that you can really enjoy your egg roll.

0910

Hon. Jeff Leal: What about fortune cookies?

Hon. Michael Chan: I wasn't the one doing that.

People say, "I don't like Chinese food," but you may like hot dogs. Right? You like hot dogs. In order to have a good hot dog, you need mustard. I was the one down in the basement mixing the mustard powder with water, putting it in a little cup and putting a lid on top of that; so, no meal without mustard.

It was a really simple job, but a perfect job for me because I was working alone down in that basement and I didn't have to talk to anyone. It was really wonderful that I did not have to talk to anybody. I worked down there for about three months.

Then I kind of won the lottery; I hit the jackpot. I had a big promotion. It was really a tremendous promotion. The boss promoted me from the basement to the ground floor. That was my promotion. From that point, I was able to move on.

To me, Ontario is really a land of opportunity, hope and, perhaps, glory. I consider myself very lucky: lucky enough to come to Ontario, lucky enough to crawl out of a basement, lucky enough to own a business, lucky enough to raise a family and lucky enough, today, to stand in the House as MPP representing the people of Markham-Unionville and be a minister of the crown in this beautiful province we call Ontario.

So much for my little story; I had better get back to the debate on Bill 49.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Keep going, Michael. Keep going.

Hon. Michael Chan: Actually, I have two immigrant stories. This is the lesser of the evils. I also have one that is quite telling, but I will reserve that for another day.

Speaker, Bill 49 is very important for newcomers and for employers. It's vitally important for Ontario. Ontario has relied upon immigrants from its earliest beginning. We continue to do so today. Ontario is the number one destination for newcomers to Canada. We receive more immigrants than the combined total of all the provinces and territories west of us.

That's all good, but we need to make some changes so that immigration continues to work for us long into the future. Our population is aging, birth rates remain low and baby boomers are leaving the workforce in increasing numbers. We need to ensure that Ontario businesses have the skilled workers they need to stay competitive in today's global economy.

Over the next 10 years, there will be more than 2.5 million job openings, the majority high-skilled. Our home-grown talent in Ontario will not be able to meet this demand alone. Newcomers already make up 30% of our workforce right now. We will need more skilled immigrants to help us fill those jobs and keep the economy growing.

An important part of Ontario's economy is trade. This is one of many areas where our diversity is a huge strength. Newcomers bring international connections and networks that drive economic growth. The more immigrants we have, the more we can tap into new markets; and the more we trade, the more jobs we create. It's as simple as that. This natural connection between trade and

immigration is why the Premier appointed me as Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. On these two fronts—trade and building a skilled workforce—Bill 49 is very important to our future.

Two years ago this month, our government announced Ontario's first-ever immigration strategy. Bill 49 is the logical next step. If passed, Ontario will be only the second province or territory in the country to have its own immigration legislation.

The other day, the member from Windsor-Tecumseh—I call him Mr. Good Morning—gave incorrect information on this score. It is important to be accurate in the information we share with the people of Ontario, so let me repeat: Ontario is only the second province in the country, after Quebec, to introduce immigration legislation.

Bill 49, if passed, would help us achieve three goals. First, it would make possible a stronger immigration partnership between Ontario and the federal government in the areas of recruitment, selection and admission of skilled immigrants. Let me speak to this for a moment. For some time, Ontario has been asking for more say and control over who comes here. We believe Ontario is in the best position to know its labour force needs. Our government is continually working with employers and different communities to assess these needs, yet federal policies have a very real impact on who is allowed to come to Ontario. Federal decisions over the decade have reduced the proportion of economic immigrants coming to Ontario to 46%. Other provinces on average receive 65%. This imbalance has hurt our economy, and because Ontario is the engine of growth in Canada, this imbalance has hurt the nation's economy.

The second goal is to strengthen our immigration strategy to raise the economic immigrants total to 70%. So we must start now. It has been my pleasure to meet with Ontario employers around the province at the annual forum called the Minister's Employers Table. Our employers know what is at stake and their interest is high in making our immigration system work better. I am encouraged by the willingness of our employers to work with our government to get this right. Where we need to do a better job and where Bill 49 is going to help us is in attracting a higher share of economic-class immigrants.

If passed, the bill will improve the accountability, transparency and management of our provincial nominee program. We are counting on the PNP to help us attract more skilled workers in Ontario. The PNP is an important program for Ontario and will become even more so in the future. Some 97% of PNP nominees remain in Ontario. Our provincial nominee program is helping Ontario employers attract and retain the skills they need for today's knowledge-based economy. Our goal is to work with the federal government to expand this program even further.

More than 100,000 newcomers arrive in Ontario every year. Bill 49 affirms our strong commitment to settlement programs that help newcomers integrate into our economy and society and contribute to Ontario. Our govern-

ment has invested more than \$900 million since 2003 doing exactly that: on bridging training, on language training and other important settlement assistance that helps newcomers succeed.

The third goal of Bill 49 is to help strengthen our ongoing efforts to reduce fraud and detect misrepresentation. It would help protect the integrity of our immigrant selection program and improve accountability.

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To sum up, Bill 49 would be a beginning, not an end. It is a necessary first step Ontario must take if we are to attract more skilled immigrants to drive our economy and keep Ontario strong. So I ask this House to give speedy approval to Bill 49 and allow Ontario to begin charting more of our own course to ensure we have the skilled workers to keep us strong and globally competitive. We want immigrants to come here and plant deep roots, build strong communities and become great citizens. Because when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Minister. It's been a pleasure working with you and being your parliamentary assistant. Thank you for sharing your story as an immigrant to this country and to this province.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin I just wanted to make note that I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre.

I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 49, a bill to establish the Ontario Immigration Act. Ontario is only the second province in Canada to bring forward immigration legislation, and I'm very proud of our government's leadership in this area. Last week, the member from Windsor-Tecumseh stated incorrectly that Ontario is the last province to bring forward its own immigration legislation. It's a basic point of fact that Ontario is the second province, after Quebec, to introduce its own immigration legislation. I want to set this record straight at the outset, because Ontarians deserve clarity and accuracy. They do not deserve to be misled.

As the minister stated, this Bill is very important for newcomers and for employers, and it's vitally important for Ontario. In fact, just last week I was in Windsor meeting with employers and talking about immigration, and those employers urged our government to continue playing a leadership role.

I have one more point of accuracy before I move on. Despite comments to the contrary in this House last week, Ontario remains the number one destination for newcomers to Canada. The sky-is-falling scenarios from the other side of the House just don't add up. In fact, Ontario receives more immigrants than the combined total of all the provinces and territories west of here.

More importantly, passing Bill 49 would make Ontario more competitive by drawing on the talents of every Ontarian and attracting the world's best and brightest. Our success in immigration policy, of course, relies on effective co-operation with the federal government. The

bottom line is that we want to work with Ottawa to ensure that the right numbers of immigrants with the right skill sets come to Ontario to support our economic growth, which in turn supports Canada's prosperity.

The proposed immigration legislation would help us do just that. The stakes are high. We have to ensure that we are meeting demographic challenges and attracting the skilled and talented newcomers who help grow our local economies. In my remarks today, I'd like to focus on the economic contributions newcomers make to Ontario and how these contributions are needed today more than ever.

First, I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the deep and enduring contributions newcomers have made to the quality of life we enjoy today. At every stage of Ontario's history, newcomers offered skills, knowledge, optimism and hard work that advanced our economy and enriched our communities. Speaker, looking around this House here today, I see many members who, like myself, are children of immigrants or immigrants themselves. We can all personally identify with and attest to the struggle to get established in a new country, to learn new customs and a new language, to open a bank account, find a house and pick a school.

Our family arrived in Toronto from Portugal in 1970 and settled in the riding of Davenport. I went straight into kindergarten and began the process of adaptation. Most newcomers will tell you it's easier for children to adapt. My father attended ESL classes—and thank goodness they were available. But I'm grateful to my parents for giving me the opportunity to grow up in Canada and to be here today in this House.

These are the experiences newcomers share with each other and help each other with. Immigrants chose Ontario because there was economic opportunity and the freedom to pursue it. Those contributions from immigrants in turn made the economy even stronger and broadened opportunity for the newcomers who followed. This is how immigration has traditionally worked in Ontario, but we cannot take it for granted. As the global economy continues to struggle, and as Ontario industries face global competition, we are counting on newcomers today more than ever before. We know that newcomers today are finding it harder to become established compared to previous generations of newcomers. At the same time, Ontario is facing competition from other countries that also want to attract skilled, bright and entrepreneurial immigrants. The Ontario Immigration Act would position Ontario for success in this global economic environment.

As we all know, talent is the most sought-after commodity in today's economy. Entrepreneurial spirit, cultural knowledge and creative thinking make economies more innovative and creative. Newcomers have a strong commitment to education. Three out of every four newcomers arrive with at least one post-secondary degree. Newcomers bring innovative ideas and unique perspectives; they make valuable contributions to emerging industries like information technology, engineering and bioscience.

It's worth noting that a recent study by the Partnership for a New American Economy found that seven of the most valuable brands in the world, including Apple, Google, AT&T and IBM, come from companies founded by immigrants or the children of immigrants.

We've seen similar successes here in Ontario: Plastic Mobile, the firm where the previous version of this bill was announced last winter, is a good example of an innovative, leading-edge firm founded by immigrants and employing dozens of Ontarians. Many successful firms in Ontario are founded by immigrants. They are doing innovative work in creating jobs and wealth for Ontario.

We also know that, to a large degree, economic success for Ontario comes down to trade; that's the foundation of our success. In the global economy, Ontario's cultural diversity gives us a clear edge. Ontarians come from more than 200 countries and speak about 200 languages. Our diversity helps Ontario companies understand new markets and recognize opportunities.

As we all know, we need more small and medium-sized companies exporting beyond North America. That's what our government's Going Global Trade Strategy is all about. Our effort to tap into new markets is greatly enhanced by people who speak different languages, have international networks and understand different business cultures. The personal knowledge and contacts of newcomers can make those markets a little less intimidating, and thanks to our diversity, people in those markets become more familiar with Ontario. When we take trade missions to other parts of the world, we're in a position to tell people that we have welcomed their country's contributions to Ontario society.

I give credit to our Premier, who realized the natural connection between immigration and international trade when she appointed my colleague, the member from Markham, as minister last June. She said to the minister: "Take Ontario's diversity to the next level. Help our newcomers build these connections to their former homelands in a way that benefits everyone." We saw what success in this area looks like with the fantastic results of the China trade mission in October. Almost 2,000 new jobs will be created in Ontario thanks to the strong and enduring connections between China and Ontario.

Of course, it's about more than just trade. With an aging population, low birth rates and retiring baby boomers, we are counting on skilled immigrants to continue helping to meet future labour needs. Our success in utilizing the skills and talents of newcomers will largely determine whether Ontario reaches its full economic potential. The Conference Board of Canada tells us that the cost of underutilizing the skills of internationally trained individuals is about \$3.4 billion to \$5 billion in lost productivity. That means that if we want immigrants to choose Ontario, we have to help them settle and succeed as quickly as possible, and our government is doing exactly that. We've invested more than \$900 million since 2003 to integrate newcomers into our society and economy. But we need to do more, and in a planned, strategic way. That's why Ontario now has an immigration strategy and a proposed new Ontario Immigration Act.

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As part of this effort, we've been working to engage employers more closely in immigration matters and diversity. That's because it is ultimately employers who give newcomers their first job. I believe that more employers are realizing that a diverse workplace is an advantage in today's global economy. Our employers know what is at stake, and their interest is high in making our immigration system work better. In other words, we must make sure newcomers know that we are not starting from scratch, that the welcome mat has been out for a long time and that we are already a very diverse society.

Speaker, it has been my pleasure to meet with Ontario employers this fall in Windsor and Oakville at an annual forum called the Minister's Employers Table. These round tables are organized by our colleagues at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and I want to thank the chamber for its vision and leadership in this area. The Minister's Employers Table sessions are a part of Ontario's immigration strategy.

Last year's sessions focused on immigrant selection. They introduced employers to the federal government's Express Entry application management system, to be implemented next year.

This year's sessions are focusing on labour market needs at the local level, and some key themes are already emerging from this year's tables. Employers are telling me that immigration is fundamental to Ontario's economic prosperity. They understand that Ontario must meet the demographic challenges of low birth rates with more immigration. One participant noted that immigration is an investment in our economic future.

They also realize that helping newcomers succeed in the labour market is a joint government/employer responsibility. Employers understand that they have a role to play in immigrant success and want to partner more with government and other agencies in this area.

Employers also believe that Ontario must continue to position itself as a top international destination for skilled immigrants. Simply put, success breeds success. We must build on our well-earned and well-deserved reputation as a diverse and tolerant society to attract more skilled workers. Our brand must be as a top international destination for global talent.

Employers also stressed the importance of soft skills like language and communications to a newcomer's overall success. While hard skills are often what initially attract employers to a job candidate, employers cite soft skills as fundamental to success on the job. Multiple participants praised existing government programs that have helped immigrants refine their occupation-related language training and skills.

I had the chance to see the fantastic newcomers settlement programs first-hand while I was representing the ministry at the employers tables. In Windsor, I had the opportunity to tour the Centre for Skills Development and Training, the training centre in Burlington, and the Halton Multicultural Council. I also met with instructors and students at the Mason Educational Centre and the Collège Boréal campus in Windsor.

One young woman's story from that visit particularly stands out. This young woman arrived in Windsor 18 months ago from China. Very much like my parents and countless other immigrants, she came to Ontario in pursuit of a better life. At Collège Boréal, she is receiving settlement assistance and language training. What struck me was her excitement about being here. She told me that she loves living in Ontario and that she wants to learn to speak English so that she can begin working as soon as possible and start giving back to a place she feels has already given her so much.

It's because of hopeful and optimistic stories like that that our government is bringing forward Bill 49. It's why we support the various on-the-ground agencies that help our newcomers build the soft skills that allow them to offer employers a complete package and get started on the road to success.

In his remarks, I heard the minister say that Ontario employers, communities and our government are in the best position to decide our labour market needs in this province. What we are realizing is that there are several different labour markets in Ontario. We need to listen to employers and educators and workers and newcomers in those communities to fine-tune our immigration selection and recruitment to meet their needs.

It is impossible for someone in Ottawa to be any closer to the ground than we are here. Here's our issue: We have the knowledge, but we don't always have the control to get the skilled newcomers we need and want. That's why we need to make immigration a top priority in this Legislature, as our government is doing by introducing the Ontario Immigration Act. If passed, Ontario would be only the second province or territory in the country to have its own immigration legislation. It would also enable Ontario to welcome more highly skilled immigrants to help meet our future labour market needs.

The legislative proposals would also strengthen our very successful immigrant selection program, the provincial nominee program, and enable it to keep Ontario growing and keep Ontario strong. Around 97% of nominees remain in Ontario. Our view is that when something is working, we need more of it, not less of it, so we're going to maximize the value of PNP to our economy.

The legislation would, if passed, demonstrate Ontario's leadership in immigration and position Ontario to take advantage of proposed federal program changes in the selection of economic immigrants scheduled for early 2015. This would include increased employer participation in immigrant selection, a key concern for businesses. If passed, the legislation would respond to labour market needs by expressly allowing the minister to set immigration targets in policy for provincially selected immigrants.

The minister talked about fraud. Bill 49 recognizes that fraud is a two-way street. The system needs to be protected against fraudulent applications, and potential newcomers need to be protected from unscrupulous operators. Bill 49 acts against both. Having a robust com-

pliance and enforcement regime will help to protect applicants and deter abuses of their trust by predatory representatives; ensure that perpetrators of program fraud cannot profit from the system; and give Ontario's immigration officers greater ability to catch misrepresentation and go after those who take advantage of immigrants and the system.

We are committed to respecting the principles upon which the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is based. We have collaborated closely with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner regarding collection, use and disclosure of personal information under the proposed immigration legislation. We want to ensure that we strike the right balance between the need to use information we collect under our selection programs and the need to protect applicants' privacy.

Bill 49 is the right bill at the right time for Ontario. Most importantly, it recognizes the long history of immigration to the province and creates a framework for implementing the province's immigration vision.

Ontario competes with other places that are trying to create the best jobs, welcome skilled people and attract new industries. To meet this challenge, our government is creating the conditions for growth. We have competitive corporate tax rates, among the lowest in North America. We offer attractive R&D incentives, among the best in the G7. We have a workforce that's among the most highly skilled and educated in the OECD. Yet our most valuable asset is the skills of our people.

It is an encouraging sign for our economy that so many highly educated newcomers choose Ontario, but we need to work to ensure they can contribute to the fullest. It's important to remember that many newcomers left home, family and friends abroad. Others had opportunities to go elsewhere. They chose us. We need to do our best for them as they integrate, find jobs and build a good life. When newcomers achieve their dreams for a better life in Ontario, their success makes life better for all Ontarians.

Ontario has found strength in diversity. It's who we are: a diverse and welcoming province; a dynamic, growing, sustainable, knowledge-driven economy; a place with the highest quality of life and people determined to keep making that quality of life even better. By passing Bill 49 into law, Ontario can strengthen our reputation as a place where people of all backgrounds can prosper, and we can support strong and diverse communities that nurture the best immigrants and the best citizens, because when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a privilege to be able to speak to this bill and to share my time with the member for Davenport.

I wanted to speak to this bill because this bill has a very personal connection to me personally, and a personal connection to, I think, a lot of people in my community

of Etobicoke Centre. My grandfather immigrated to Canada in the late 1940s from post-World War II Germany. At that time, he applied to come to Canada because he knew—or he had heard—that jobs were available here, that there was an opportunity for him to build a life for himself and his family. In fact, he came by himself and spent two years living here before my grandmother was able to join him with her children, my mother.

When he was applying, they asked a number of questions, and some of the questions that my grandfather told me that they asked him were pretty basic things. They asked things like, “Can you work? Are you healthy? Are you strong? Can you do manual labour?” Those are the kinds of questions that were being asked at the time. And when my grandfather came, sure enough, he applied those skills; he applied that willingness to work and that motivation to some very, very labour-intensive work. He worked for Ontario Hydro building some of the hydro power lines that we have in our province. He eventually was able to get a job at Canada Post and worked for Canada Post for many years before retiring.

The reason I think this story is important is because, like so many immigrants, he came to this country believing that there was opportunity here—knowing that there was opportunity here. Canada facilitated that opportunity by making sure that they were attracting the kinds of people that Canada needed to make this country great. We need to continue to do that, and I think that what this bill does is it helps to ensure that we will continue to do that. We, of course, need the help of our federal partners, the federal government, but I think it takes important steps to make sure that we can do a better job of doing that.

Since my grandfather’s day of immigrating to Canada, the global economy has changed. The nature of the labour market has changed; it has become more global. When I think of the immigrants of today—recently I met someone who is working as a doctor for my GP who came to Canada from the Soviet Union and who had full medical qualifications. She spent a tremendous number of years and effort trying to gain medical qualification here in Ontario. Initially, when she came, she thought that process would be much easier. Unfortunately, it took her many, many years. The unfortunate part is that she discovered this only upon arriving in Canada.

Hon. Liz Sandals: That’s the problem.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Exactly. That’s the problem, exactly, as the minister’s saying. People come to Canada thinking that they’ll have that job, just like my grandfather thought he would have that job. My grandfather got that job; the immigrants of today deserve the same.

Once in a while, when I take a taxi to events in my community, for example, I meet drivers who are qualified in many different fields who came to Canada thinking they’d be able to work in that field, and now they can’t. We need to do better by those folks. They’ve come here to build this country, and they deserve better. And we deserve better. Making sure that immigrants to our country come to Canada knowing what to expect will

not only ensure that they live a better quality of life—that in itself is a good reason to take these steps—but it will also ensure that we all live a better quality of life.

When I think about our economy, we have shortages—yes, we have unemployment, and we need to tackle those issues, but we also have a lot of small businesses that are looking for workers in skilled fields, and we’re not able to fill those vacancies. There are a lot of folks from around the world who could help us do that, and we need to help make sure that happens. We all benefit from this.

There’s a couple of things in this bill that I would like to highlight that I think are important. One is that we are going to be able, through this legislation, to accelerate the recognition of credentials for folks who are applying. That’s going to allow people who are being accepted to know faster that they’ve been accepted and allow those folks who aren’t going to be accepted to work in their fields to be declined more quickly so that they have the information before them to make a decision as to whether they want to come or not. That’s the first thing.

The second thing is, provisions have been put into this bill to clamp down on fraud. There are so many people who come to this country with great hope and with great optimism. Unfortunately, in some cases, they are made promises by folks about services that will be offered to help them settle here, about jobs that they will get when they come here, and that never comes to fruition. This bill will allow the government to institute fines; it will allow criminal charges to be imposed on folks who abuse that trust. I think that’s critically important so that people applying to Canada, applying to come to Ontario, will have faith that they will be treated as they should be.

I think the last thing I would just mention quickly is we need to make sure that our federal government is working with us on this. Ontario understands the local economy; we understand the local conditions here and what the labour market demands are. It’s really important that the federal government partner with us to make sure that we can better meet the demands of the labour market here.

When my grandfather came to Canada, the system that recognized his credentials, the system that recognized his experience and what he could bring to Canada, was there to ensure that it matched the labour market needs of the day. We need to do well by those people applying to Canada today, just as we did by my grandfather. Let’s make sure that we attract the folks, that we give folks the information they need to know whether they’ll be able to work in their chosen field or not.

We’re going to accelerate that process, and we’re going to work with our federal partners to make sure that we do well by those people who want to come to Canada and help build this country and make it better, and those people who want to come to Canada to help build this country, to make it better for all of us in all 107 ridings around this province.

I think this is an important bill. It takes important steps to make sure we accelerate the recognition of credentials, that we clamp down on fraud and that we work even

more effectively with our federal partners to make sure that we attract the kinds of folks who can build this country and do well by them. I hope we can enjoy the support of members from across the aisle as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to offer a few comments in regard to the bill. One of the things that I certainly want to recognize is the value that the speakers have made with regard to the value of immigration.

Regardless of whether you came in the last 10 months or the last 200 years, the motives have very often been exactly the same thing: It was a better way of life, there was a greater economic opportunity, and the fundamentals of democratic society, the stability that goes with democratic society, is certainly an attraction as well.

One of the things that is really important as we pursue 21st-century immigration is to look at the kinds of balance. The speakers have talked about the economic influence, and obviously that's an important one, but we have to always consider how we're going to create the right balance.

I recognized in the remarks a moment ago the fact that we have people without jobs and jobs without people. When we have that kind of data available to us, I think it just makes it that much more important to understand the mechanics of immigration and the kinds of benefits, both for the community at large but also the people coming.

One of the things that I've always felt was most unfortunate was some kind of message that people would get in their own home country: "You can be this when you come to Canada," and they discover that, no, they can't.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, this is the first opportunity I'll have, as the critic of citizenship and immigration, to stand up in my role to discuss this bill and give my questions and comments to the minister.

I understand that the Auditor General is doing her annual report, and that will be released next week on Tuesday. But I was able to obtain a couple of highlights of some of the things she's going to chat about. One thing I'm particularly interested in looking into, and what her remarks are going to be on, is the provincial nominee program and how that's working—how that's working now, and then comparing it to the kinds of changes that are in this bill that are, hopefully, going to make it better and improve it.

As the member from York Simcoe said, managing the expectations of someone who wants to come to another country, whether it's Canada or Ontario or another province, is something that has to be very thoughtful and streamlined, because we don't want to have that reputation of asking people to come, and then they arrive and, sure enough, it's not what they signed up for. Then, you know, they could feel trapped here, and they've left their home country. So there are a lot of socio-economic concerns when you apply for something and it doesn't come out to what you expect. It's a life-changing experience, as we've heard from many members.

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The other thing I want to address is the fact—and I'd like to talk about this later on if I have the opportunity—that we're gathering information and collecting information and we're supposed to use it appropriately. I understand they consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, so that's interesting, and I'll make some comments on that later. But the information piece and how we're going to use it is something of interest to myself, and I'll pursue that later on. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to be able to speak for a couple of minutes to this very important bill. Someone said to me once, and I think it's very true for virtually all of us, that we are all immigrants to this place. We all have immigrant stories. My own story starts on my father's side, with my grandparents leaving England after World War I, when there wasn't much opportunity for them. They had a brother here in Canada who suggested that this was the land of milk and honey. They sold everything, bought passage, shipped everything they owned here, brought their children here and landed just in time for the Great Depression of 1929.

There was no social safety net in those days, and a job that had been promised to my grandfather as supervisor of maintenance for TTC, of course, had disappeared. So the first 10 years for them was very difficult. I grew up listening to the stories of my grandparents talking about how hard it was to be an immigrant to this great country but also how glad they were that they stuck it out and stayed, because it gave their children and their grandchildren a fantastic opportunity to grow and to thrive.

Of course, coming from Aurora myself, we have one of the greatest, I think, successful immigrant stories in the form of Frank Stronach, who founded Magna International. The headquarters is still in Aurora, providing a lot of wealth and a lot of jobs for people in Canada.

I'm very excited by Bill 49. I think, from a high level, just the fact that the vision and the objectives that it will set, if passed, for immigration to Ontario is very, very important for the success of people coming to this great province. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to provide some feedback and comments to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade and the members for Davenport and Etobicoke Centre: excellent stories. I don't think that any of us can say we're not an immigrant; it's a matter of when we became an immigrant to Canada and Ontario.

I do want to comment on one of the points that the minister raised: his request for a speedy approval to Bill 49 from the opposition. It can't be reinforced enough that it's not up to us to have speedy or slow approvals of legislation. The government House leader—that would be the Liberal House leader—chooses which items we are going to debate in this chamber. It is the Liberal

House leader who puts forward the motions for closures. So whether or not a speedy passage can occur with Bill 49 very much depends on the individual who sits at the corner of your front bench.

I will be speaking very briefly later on to the Ontario Immigration Act and will cover off some of the points that we would like to make sure are part of the public debate that must occur when we have new pieces of legislation coming forward. But I think it was important for clarity to remind people that it is not a matter for the opposition to hold up or in fact speed up legislation through this legislative chamber; that lies solely and wholly with the government members and most particularly the House leader. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I now recognize the minister for two minutes on his response.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a good day today. I heard from my PA from Davenport, the MPP from Etobicoke Centre, the MPP from York-Simcoe, the MPP from Dufferin-Caledon and also the MPP from London-Fanshawe. I think there is a common consensus about newcomers, about immigrants, that we all recognize that they're here and it is very important that they are here.

I heard some stories about your grandfather, which is also fantastic. We all had a story to tell. I had mine. I had two, by the way. I have spoken on one. The other one will be coming up, maybe, another day, but that one is quite a bit tougher than the one I mentioned.

Anyhow, I think Bill 49—again, allow me to repeat that it's going to do three things over there. One is to strengthen the communication between Ontario and the federal government. I think this is critically important because they are the ones who actually assess people, the incoming, and also outgoing as well. Strengthening that communication relationship, a line that we can talk, I think is very, very important. Also, the streams of immigrants coming over here, too, the skilled workers: Definitely, we need those skilled workers, but perhaps lower-skilled or unskilled workers we should be looking into, too, because I keep hearing other provinces, like Alberta, perhaps Saskatchewan—they talk about the lower-skilled workers as well. So those are the communications that we should really strengthen and get the input back to the federal government.

I see the clock is running out, so I'm going to sit down here and continue the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to stand down the hour lead from our critic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Dufferin-Caledon has requested that their lead be stood down. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to speak to Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

I again want to remind everyone, although it's pretty obvious to most of us here, that of course we are all immigrants. It is strictly a matter of what year we came. My family would have been called today economic refugees, because the country that we were leaving was in dire circumstances. I jokingly say they ran out of food so we came to Canada.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Jokingly, but that's what happened.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: That's exactly what happened. I think you can probably figure out where from the Isles we came.

Anyway, I would like to take this opportunity to speak on Bill 49. This bill is actually a reintroduction in the Ontario Legislature. It was previously called Bill 161 and was introduced by the current Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and minister responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games. Bill 161, of course, died on the order paper when the government called the election in June.

I want to highlight the fact that our federal counterparts have made multiple extensive changes to the immigration system here in Canada over the last decade, including the Federal Skilled Worker Program and the provincial nominee program, to name two. In addition, our federal counterparts plan to introduce the expression-of-interest immigration reforms to make the immigration system more responsive to labour market demands. The EOI or expression of interest "will provide governments and Canadian employers access to skilled foreign workers and expedite their entry into Canada for jobs that aren't being filled by people already" living "in Canada." The EOI will also "complement the provincial nominee program which will continue to be a key mechanism to allow provinces, territories, and employers to meet regional labour market needs. Almost 41,000 provincial nominees (including their spouses and dependants) were admitted to Canada through the PNP in 2012, up from approximately 3,500 in 2006."

The provincial nominee program, as stated on the ministry's website, is "an immigration program through which Ontario nominates individuals and their families for permanent resident status based on a pre-approved job offer in the province." I think this is important to mention because of its integral role in our immigration policy.

1000

It's also important to talk about the immigration policy of other jurisdictions. Of course, the most obvious and cited example is Quebec's immigration policy. As a result of the 1991 Canada-Quebec Accord, Quebec fully assumed responsibility for establishing immigration levels and for the selection and integration of immigrants. In areas under its responsibility, Quebec develops its own policies and programs, legislates, regulates and sets its own standards.

In contrast, Ontario's immigration policy is tied to that of the federal government. Media focus has been on Ontario taking a Quebec-style approach to immigration.

I want to mention some important statistics about immigration in our province and other jurisdictions. The

federal government recently released immigration stats for last year. What they also provided was a table of statistics from 2004 through to and including 2013 on the amount of permanent residents in each province and territory.

There are three categories that make up the definition of a permanent resident. Permanent residents are based on foreign nationals sponsored by close relatives or family members in Canada, and include spouses and partners, dependent children, parents and grandparents. Permanent residents are also based on economic immigrants, who are people selected for their skills and ability to contribute to Canada's economy, including skilled workers, business immigrants, provincial and territorial nominees and live-in caregivers. In addition, permanent residents are based on refugees, which include government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, refugees landed in Canada and dependants of refugees landed in Canada who were living abroad.

The number of permanent residents is quite startling. Newfoundland and Labrador saw their permanent resident number nearly double from 2004 to 2013. Prince Edward Island's permanent resident number tripled. Nova Scotia's increased by almost 1,000. New Brunswick's increased by more than 1,000. Quebec's number increased during the same time frame. Manitoba's almost doubled. Saskatchewan's number increased from roughly 1,000 to 10,000 during the same time frame.

Only two provinces' permanent resident numbers decreased. They are British Columbia and right here in Ontario. I don't think it takes too much to make a connection between the economy of Ontario currently and in the last number of years compared to other parts of Canada. In the time from 2004 to 2013, Ontario has lost 25,000 permanent residents.

Interjections.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Perhaps the minister needs to listen more and talk less.

What is also sad is the fact that in the breakdown of regions within our province, only four regions saw increases in their permanent resident numbers. This is quite sad.

If we are to further break down these statistics, things get even more dire. If we are to just look at how many of those permanent residents are economic immigrants, which this bill focuses on, the numbers get worse. For example, the number of economic immigrants in Ontario in 2004 was 67,602. In 2013, that number significantly declined: It was 47,623. That's a 20,000-person drop. I consider that disappointing to say the least.

Let's compare these numbers to the western provinces where we continue hearing stories about them taking away our Ontario-trained skilled workers. Manitoba, in 2003, had 4,999 economic immigrants; that number grew to 9,602 in 2013. That means it almost doubled, for those who can't do the numbers. Saskatchewan had a meagre 883 economic immigrants in 2004. In 2013, they had a whopping total of 8,812. That is an astonishing increase for Saskatchewan. In 2004, Alberta had 8,742 economic

immigrants. In 2013, they had 22,645 economic immigrants.

There's another interesting statistic. TD Economics performed a study looking into interprovincial migration. This bill is obviously referencing immigration from outside Canada into Canada, but I think this stat paints more of a complete picture. TD Economics performed a study looking into interprovincial migration, and guess what? Ontario lost roughly 18,000 individuals to other provinces in 2012. Alberta gained roughly 47,000 individuals from other provinces. Saskatchewan gained another 2,500 individuals from other provinces. The proof is in the pudding. Economics absolutely plays a crucial part in why these two provinces have gained so many individuals from other provinces across Canada.

The study by TD Economics states, "Drawing Canadians to their province is not a new phenomenon for these two prairie provinces. Saskatchewan has been a net beneficiary from interprovincial flows since 2007, while Alberta has not experienced a net loss since 1994. Both provinces have posted the strongest recovery since the recession and exhibit the tightest labour markets, so it is no surprise that they demonstrate the strongest lure for other Canadians. The unemployment rates in these provinces are the lowest in Canada and act a signal to potential entrance to their labour force. Further, real per capita incomes are higher in both provinces relative to the rest of Canada."

The study's sum-up of these two provinces was, "Alberta and Saskatchewan are likely to continue to lead the pack in terms of net inflows of migrants across Canada and within Canada, as both resource-rich provincial economies are expected to outperform the rest of Canada."

This government cannot continue to ignore the importance of having a strong economy. In 2012, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants produced a survey on the services aiding immigrants in Ontario. In it, there are some facts that bear out what we've been discussing here. Some 80% of new Canadians in Ontario stay in their first city of residence. However, of the 20% who relocate from their first city of residence, the largest percentage do so because they're seeking better employment opportunities—not a surprise to you, I'm sure, Speaker.

I think the numbers speak for themselves. Here in Ontario, the opportunities simply don't exist that once did. Our attraction to immigrants and migrants and our economic success are linked together, whether you like it or not.

If we want to stop our population from leaving our province, then we must return to being the economic engine of Canada. But as long as our economy is controlled by a government that is not keeping its eye on the ball, I have little confidence that we will ever return to our once-proud status as the economic engine of Canada.

When we were prosperous, not so long ago, we were attracting more new Canadians to Ontario. The finance minister's own numbers bear this out. From 1997 until

approximately 2002, this province experienced one of the greatest booms in immigration that we've seen in the last 40 years. It also happened to coincide with one of the greatest periods of economic prosperity this province has seen in that same time frame. It was a time when the Progressive Conservative government created a million jobs in Ontario. No wonder we continue to hear stories of individuals leaving our province to go west.

The worst part of it is it's skilled young workers who are leaving our province. As noted in the study when they say that "migrants tend to be younger, well-educated and highly skilled," we're losing the cream of the crop, Speaker.

I also want to mention one more interesting finding from the TD Economics study. They said, "As populations permanently move to different regions, their tax revenues that follow them can be counted on to bolster their new government coffers."

The reason I wanted to mention this is because, as we heard during the recent fall economic statement this fall, this government reported that their revenue projections were off by half a billion dollars and resulted in lower projections for the next three years. I'm not saying that this is the reason for this massive miscalculation. But I do think it is something worth looking at more closely.

This government has mismanaged our province's immigration policy for a decade, when it could have been working with the federal government to ensure Ontario's economic needs were met by new Canadians.

In regard to the provincial nominee program in Ontario, many of Ontario's nominees leave Ontario for the western provinces after a number of years because of Ontario's poor economic climate. As a result, Ontario's allotment of spots remains stuck at 2,500, whereas Alberta and Saskatchewan have 5,000 spots available.

Minister, if the truth hurts, you'd better listen to it.

The government has brought forward this legislation because the federal government forced their hand with the introduction of the 2015 expression-of-interest policy.

Let's take a moment to discuss what this bill will do.

Bill 49 will allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council, through regulation, to create a registry for employers to select foreign nationals who have been selected for a selection process. We're back to that old "by regulation" trick again, where we won't be participating in any kind of public debate or discussion on which employers, which parts of the economy, need the assistance and will benefit from new immigration.

An employer who wants to participate in a selection program must sign up for the newly created registry, unless stated in the regulations.

The minister may establish a fee for employers to pay to sign up and participate in the newly created registry and selection process.

This part of the bill provides the minister with the power to use any information provided by the employer, given to the registry, to be used as deemed fit by the minister.

I want to say, Speaker, at this point, that I always get concerned when it's governments picking and choosing. Historically—and I'm not picking on any political affili-

ation of a government—when governments get involved in picking and choosing who gets the additional immigration employees, we don't do a very good job of it. It's actually not our responsibility. When we try to do that, we can get caught.

The minister is also granted the power to distribute the information provided by the registered employers to other provinces, territories and the federal government, if it is deemed fit by the minister.

We're giving a lot of power to one person.

The minister will also establish the conditions to sign up to the registry. The minister can also cancel the registration of an employer if the minister believes it gives incorrect information or does not comply with the conditions of the registry. The minister only has to provide a written letter to the employer of the cancellation. Where is the right of appeal there, Speaker?

This part of the bill was created to make the province compliant with the federal government's 2015 expression-of-interest policy. In addition, it is also in keeping with the recommendation made by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to enable employers and immigration consultants to navigate the EOI system.

Another important part of Bill 49 is that it will establish a provincial immigration selection process, in keeping with the development of the 2015 expression-of-interest regulations.

This part of the bill acknowledges that this program can only take effect through an agreement with the federal government, as stated in the federal legislation, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which authorizes the provincial government to create and/or continue a selection program. There are similar agreements in existence in provinces like Manitoba and British Columbia, while no such agreement currently exists in Ontario. As no agreement exists with the federal government, this provision is largely in anticipation of the federal government's new immigration strategy in 2015. A selection program cannot exist if it is not authorized by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Another part of Bill 49 will create enforcement and compliance officers, to ensure employers and international job recruits are not providing false information. They will be able to access fines and penalties. This part of the bill is for fraud prevention purposes.

The ministry has suggested—sorry, Speaker. You look like you're going to stop me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce, in the public gallery, some constituents of mine: Elizabeth Davis-Dagg; and Selena Campbell, with her children LeRoy

Campbell and Debbie Campbell. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature the family of Bhutla Karpoche, who works in Cheri DiNovo's office: Lobsang Chozin, Kari Khedup, Sonam Youngdon and Tenzin Dhakden. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Granville Anderson: It's my pleasure to introduce the mother of page Hannah Hamilton; her grandmother, Dianne Mott; her sister, Sophie Hamilton; and her brother, Jake Hamilton. Welcome.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to introduce to this assembly two of my friends, Hanif Patni of Ottawa and Kristine Hubbard of Toronto. They're not quite in the gallery at the moment, but they are here today to talk about passenger safety in taxicabs.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise on a point of order to seek unanimous consent that the orders for second reading and third reading of Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day, be called immediately and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bill be put immediately without debate or amendment; and that the order of the House referring Bill 28, An Act to proclaim the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month, to the Standing Committee on Social Policy be discharged; and the order for third reading of the bill be called immediately, and that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to the member that I'd like to finish introductions. If we could correct the clock in any way possible.

The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a real pleasure for me to introduce some folks in the members' west gallery: Atul Swarup; his daughter, Lauren Van Leeuwen; and Sarah-Sophie Dahl, who is an exchange student from Denmark, here in Ontario with the Peterborough Rotary Club. It's an opportunity for her to see question period and parliamentary democracy here in the province of Ontario.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have a few introductions. Susie Matthias and Shelly Ireland from London, Ontario, are joining us today, and Judith Robert from Toronto.

I'd also like to welcome Smokey Thomas and Doug Evetts to the Legislature. Good morning.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to introduce some of my constituents: the mayor of French River, Claude Bouffard; Sébastien Goyer, the CEO of French River and my Liberal candidate in the last election; and Michelle Clark.

Hon. Mario Sergio: We have 43 students visiting the Legislature today from James Cardinal McGuigan Catholic High School with their teacher, Joseph Pulcini, the department head of Canadian and world studies. I would like to welcome them, and I hope that they will enjoy the day at Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to introduce and welcome Warren "Smokey" Thomas, the president of OPSEU, as well as Doug Evetts, his assistant.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the grade 10 students and staff from Erindale Secondary School. They are visiting the

Legislature today. They're not here yet, but they will be here soon.

Erindale Secondary School was a recent recipient of a 2013-14 Premier's Award for Accepting Schools, so I want to congratulate them and welcome them to the Legislature as well.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to introduce, in the press gallery here with us today, Isabel Alves, from Sol Português, a wonderful newspaper in my riding of Davenport. Welcome, Isabel.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome today two students who live in London West and attend Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School in London: Brienna French and Lena Gahwi, who are volunteering in my constituency office.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to introduce Dann Michols, chair of the board of directors of one of the four UNESCO biosphere reserves in Ontario, the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network; and Louise Mantha, his wife. She is on the board, responsible for the arts portfolio, and they are both involved in the Rotary. I applaud them for their wonderful volunteerism.

Rano Daoud is also sitting in our members' gallery. He's the president of the Frontenac provincial riding association. His wife, Stephanie, has just completed, half an hour ago, her last test to be a licensed and registered psychologist. They are both from my riding, and I welcome them warmly to the chamber.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us from Don Valley East here today is Arnella Csongradi. Welcome to the Legislature.

Also joining us at the Legislature today are about 100 volunteers and the volunteer ambassador for the Pan/Parapan Am Games, Pinball Clemons, who is here today. I want to say thank you to the volunteers who are here supporting the Pan Am Games.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Joining us here today in the public gallery is a parent of Nick Zalewski, one of our pages: his mother, Catherine O'Halloran. Welcome.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to allow members to wear red rose buttons in recognition of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. December 6 marks 25 years since the 1989 murders of 14 young women at École Polytechnique de Montréal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Community and Social Services has requested unanimous consent to wear buttons. Agreed? Agreed.

ANNIVERSARY OF MONTREAL MASSACRE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seek unanimous consent for a moment of silence in commemoration of the Montreal massacre.

This Saturday actually marks the 25th anniversary of the murder of 14 women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, and as the minister has mentioned, it also marks the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. In light of this, I think it's appropriate for us to rise in this Legislature for a moment of silence and observance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of the third party has requested unanimous consent to recognize a moment of silence for the massacre in Montreal. Agreed? Agreed.

I'd ask everyone to rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1040

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I seek unanimous consent to put a motion without notice for Bill 16 and Bill 28.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested unanimous consent to put a motion on Bill 16 and Bill 28. Agreed? I heard a no.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. I think I'll ask to stand down the lead question until the minister arrives. Agreed?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of the loyal opposition has requested to stand down his lead. I move to the leader of the third party.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Liberals don't seem to believe that people aren't getting their money. The minister says she's finding it difficult to validate these anecdotes. Here's a validation for her: Leanne Chard's son has a disability and he relies on ODSP to pay his bills. When his cheque didn't arrive, Leanne looked into the issue. She was told her son was removed from the system and Leanne, as her son's trustee, was also removed from the system. Leanne called the Liberal constituency office of her MPP and was given the cold shoulder.

Will the Liberals admit that these problems are real and actually start fixing them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I think everyone in this House knows, we are doing the very important work of replacing an old, outdated system that did not serve clients well, nor was it the best system for the workers. As we're in this transition period, I want to say thank you to those front-line workers who are working very, very hard to fix any problems as they arise. I also want people who are recipients of social assistance to know that we

are absolutely committed to making sure they get the cheques that they are, in fact, entitled to.

I do want to comment: Additional staff have been sent to local offices; people are working around the clock to fix any problems, and we've had great success. In fact, within 24 hours, 99% of the overpayments were stopped or retracted. This is a system that has worked in Australia, the UK, New Zealand, Germany and New York City. I know the minister will want to address any supplementary questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Leanne's son's next cheque is actually due on December 22, and she's worried that if there's another round of problems there will be nobody for her to call over the holidays.

Can the Liberals guarantee that this problem is solved and that there won't be any late cheques in December?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I want to reassure all members of this House that we take our jobs in the Ministry of Community and Social Services extremely seriously. The welfare of vulnerable people is our number one concern. I have been asking searching questions of my officials, I've been calling mayors; I want to hear about those vulnerable people who have, unfortunately, not received the appropriate payment to which they are entitled. It is this type of hands-on approach that I'm personally taking to this issue, and I want to hear everything that I need to hear in order to ensure that the December round of cheques is, in fact, successful.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister should tell her MPPs that she wants to hear the stories, because Leanne went to her MPP, a Liberal MPP, and was given the cold shoulder when her story was shared. The minister needs to actually tell her MPPs to do their job. Leanne is worried that her problem won't be solved and, frankly, I am worried too.

Since this program launched, we're told that nearly 10,000 separate incident reports have been created, and hundreds more are being created by the day—incident reports because there have been problems with the cheques. Now, that says to me that the problem still has not been fixed. Can the Liberals give any guarantees whatsoever to the thousands of vulnerable Ontarians who rely on ODSP and social assistance that their next cheques are actually going to be in the mail and delivered on time?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I do want to reassure the leader of the third party that we have put in a very strong support strategy for our front-line workers to troubleshoot issues that may be arising from the new system.

Since the SAMS launch, my ministry has also put in place dedicated phone lines and email addresses for areas that are particularly challenging for staff, so they have direct access to support staff. There are some 42 addi-

tional staff in the field. Any area office that is having specific differences, we will send committed individuals to that office. So anybody, in terms of our municipal partners, ODSP officers requesting that kind of additional support, they're going to be getting that. We are, of course, in daily contact with all our partners. I'm getting reports on an ongoing basis in terms of the issues locally.

Again, we urge any person who has an issue with their payment to contact their caseworker, and we will make every effort to rectify the problem.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday, we asked for the contract that the Liberals signed with IBM for the deeply flawed SAMS program, but we didn't get it. So I'm going to try again. Will the Liberals release the contract with IBM that left people across Ontario without the social assistance and ODSP they rely on?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Again, clearly hearing the comments made yesterday, I think we're all aware that there is a process in terms of document release. I have looked into this, and of course we wish to be open and transparent. So we are going to be following the type of process that is required in this type of contractual relationship between a private company and the government. There may be some proprietary commercially sensitive information in the contract. The process will be followed. If there is a formal document request, I certainly won't interfere with that process.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government confirmed that Ontario is getting private sector IT support for the massive problems with this SAMS program. When there's a problem with the software, Ontarians deserve to know who is actually paying to fix it. Either IBM has to fix the problem or we're paying out of pocket to fix their faulty product. Will the Liberals release the contract so we can see which one of these it is?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I have been informed that the issue of transition was addressed in the contract and that our private sector partners are covering all the costs of the transition support that is required for the front line through the requirements of the contract.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals were warned that this computer system was not ready and would likely have massive problems. In fact, the people who warned them are right here in this House with us today. They ignored the advice, and now vulnerable Ontarians are the ones who are having to pay the price.

Ontarians have the right to know who is paying for that decision. Will the Deputy Premier, the minister re-

sponsible for transparency, live up to that mandate and actually release the contract?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can simply repeat what I've said before. There's a process in terms of release of this type of information. I will not interfere in any way with that process. I will encourage that process to take place. Clearly, this type of information may contain some commercially sensitive information, and I think everyone needs to respect that.

1050

I want to just make it very clear that job one in our ministry is to ensure that all vulnerable people are appropriately taken care of—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I'm trying my best to listen to the answer, but with the interruptions on my left, it's a little difficult.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're not going to learn much from the answer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I don't need your comments.

Minister?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I simply would like to reassure everyone yet again that our job is to ensure that cheques are delivered smoothly. Every effort is being taken to ensure that the next cheque run will go well. People are working constantly in this regard. We have the support of our private sector partners—IBM—in this endeavour, and we want to assure everyone that we are following due process.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Ontario's auto sector is the backbone of communities throughout our province. We all know the hard work and tremendous pride that auto workers put into their jobs. That's why it's so alarming to hear union and auto industry executives raise concerns about the troubled state of General Motors' Canadian operations. Next year, for example, Chevrolet Camaro production stops in Oshawa altogether and will move to Lansing, Michigan. In 2016—just a year and a half from now—one of the two assembly plants in Oshawa is scheduled to close.

A shutdown of Oshawa would result in nearly 3,600 jobs lost. Minister, what action is your government taking to stop the shutdown of auto production in Oshawa, Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you right off the bat what we're not going to do—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. The members closest to me on my left: It's very difficult for me to carry on if you keep trying to shout down the person who's answering. Next time, you'll be named.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you right off the bat what we're not going to do. We're not going to do what the PC Party did. At the earliest sign of trouble in the auto sector during the recession, they ran and hid. They failed to stand up for the auto sector.

We partnered with the federal government to make sure that GM is even here today, because had we not done that, had we taken the advice of the party opposite, we would not have an auto sector like we have today here in the province of Ontario—an auto sector that employs over 400,000 Ontarians.

The member raises some valid concerns. We are looking carefully at the future of GM in Oshawa. In my supplementary, I'll talk a little bit more about the optimism of the new president of GM with regard to their investments in Ontario.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, these aren't meant to be hard-hitting partisan questions. This is meant to stand up for the hard-working men and women in our auto sector.

Other jurisdictions, as you know, are taking urgent action to strengthen their auto sectors for the 21st-century marketplace. In 2013, Michigan's governor created the Michigan automotive office. This office is headed by an experienced industry professional who reports directly to the governor. That's how seriously Michigan takes its auto industry, so it's not surprising that Oshawa's Chevrolet Camaro is moving to Lansing, Michigan.

The Michigan automotive office has issued a 30-year strategic plan to grow the state's automotive industry base. Minister, I just ask you: Where is your long-term plan to grow Ontario's automotive base?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, let me talk about the investments this government has made, over the objections of the party opposite, to grow our economic base in the auto sector: \$800 million of investment we have invested in the last 10 years. We've gotten back \$10 billion of investment made by auto companies here in the province of Ontario for investments that the party opposite refers to as "corporate welfare."

Shame on you. Shame on the party opposite to get up today, a party that does not support any support that we've given to the auto sector, any support that we've given to the hard-working men and women—400,000 strong—who have jobs in this sector. Mr. Speaker, they've opposed us every step of the way.

We'll continue to work with the auto sector in this province, we will continue to work with the companies, we will continue to make those important investments, and we will continue to have a strong auto sector here in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister can be partisan and get in a bickering match with us, I suppose. That's not going to help the workers who are depending on his government to do the right thing.

Obviously, what you're doing isn't working, Minister. GM is leaving. The plans are on the table. The warning signs are there. So what you're doing isn't working.

In Michigan, they don't just throw billions of dollars after billions of dollars. They have a seven-point plan that doesn't involve money. It involves marketing, strategic branding, talent development and attracting new talent, engineering networks, policy and legislative advice to the government, business development advice, working collaboratively with the government, capital attraction and development. These are things that don't cost billions of dollars.

You raise electricity rates, slap on the red tape, put up the taxes and then throw in billions of dollars to correct your mistakes. It's not working. When are you going to come up with a 30-year plan that works?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know why the party opposite so admires the administration in Michigan: They're a right-to-work state. That's why they like the state of Michigan. You know what else, Mr. Speaker? They have an \$8 minimum wage in Michigan. I know that party would love to bring our minimum wage down to \$8, but get this, Mr. Speaker: They also have a lack of support for maternity leave in Michigan. That's the kind of administration they want to run.

That's not the kind of province we're building here in Ontario. We support our auto workers, and we support our auto—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We'll continue to work in partnership with that sector. We're going to continue to make investments like we made near his riding, in Alliston: a \$857-million investment by Honda just a few weeks ago. We will—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. It doesn't seem as though I'm getting through to some of you. On the government side, Minister of the Environment, you're the loudest. I would ask you to keep it down.

New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, your government has continuously promised to fix the troubled CCACs. We have heard repeatedly of the bloated CCAC CEO executive salaries, which cost us \$3.5 million every year. All the while, there are cuts to home care services that are leaving our frail elderly people and people with disabilities in peril. The situation is truly appalling. Minister, can you tell this House how you are going to get these 14 CEO salaries

under control so that money can be put back into front-line care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Over the last number of years, we have been reducing the CCAC CEO salaries considerably. In 2007, they amounted to \$5.6 million in total, and in 2012, they were down to \$3.6 million. It's not just the CEO salaries; as well, the proportion of the total CCAC expenses that goes to administrative costs has also declined significantly and is estimated at 4.4% in 2012-13. So they are coming down.

But we also have an important bill before the Legislature, Bill 8, which looks specifically and directly at the issue of executive compensation in the broader public sector. It's actually going to pertain to our CCACs as well and the salaries of the CEOs and the senior staff there. It's going to prescribe the parameters going forward in terms of the level of compensation that's responsible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Minister of Health: Your ministry stated to the Ottawa Sun that it "does not have access to the terms and conditions of the CCAC CEO compensation plans." This is a poor excuse. In fact, your excuse sounds an awful lot like the excuse the Deputy Premier used to give about Chris Mazza's blockbuster salary at Ornge, and we all know how that ended.

Minister, once again, under your Liberal government, patients and front-line care are suffering because you refuse to take action. Why are you abdicating your oversight responsibilities and allowing these salaries to compromise front-line care?

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm taking my responsibility as Minister of Health very, very seriously. I appeal to the opposition—I suspect that we might have the support of the member opposite—to support and pass Bill 8, because that bill does precisely what the member opposite is asking for: It allows us to get access to that information and to prescribe, within certain parameters, what that executive compensation level should be, not just in our CCACs but across the broader public sector.

I look forward to the support of the member opposite. It's an important bill. We've been debating it here in the Legislature. The sooner we get it passed, the sooner we're going to be able to move further in the direction where we all agree we need to to control executive compensation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Minister of Health: It's appalling that you would deflect your ministerial responsibility and not take immediate action to get these CEO salaries under control. If it's true that your ministry does not have access to the terms and conditions of these salaries, then why haven't you taken action and tabled legislation in this House to fix it?

You use time allocation for lots of other things; why haven't you used time allocation for this one, Minister?

You've had weeks and numerous opportunities to do so, yet you continue to allow front-line care to suffer.

Minister, when are you actually going to take action to fix this problem?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: In fact, we have tabled legislation to do precisely what the member is asking for. It's called Bill 8. In reference to time allocation, as well: We did, so there's no excuse.

We have the opportunity in this Legislature, in a very short period of time, to pass this important legislation that will do what the member is asking: to provide those parameters, and the direction and the ability for every ministry in this government to oversee, be accountable for, provide direction to, create parameters for and control executive compensation in the broader public sector. I find it unbelievable that the member opposite didn't know that that legislation already exists.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Acting Premier. Your government used the dictatorial power of the majority to shut down the justice committee with respect to the inquiry into the gas plant fiasco, denying us the opportunity to interview such key witnesses as Laura Miller and Peter Faist.

But there's another matter: Going into the election, there was an ongoing OPP criminal investigation into the deletion and destruction of documents within the Office of the Premier of Ontario.

Acting Premier, can you give us an update? Because since the election we've heard nothing. Can you give us an update, or have you asked the OPP for an update on that investigation into criminal activity in the Premier's office?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for posing the question, and I want to thank the members of the justice committee, who have been working very hard in completing the work of the justice committee, as was committed by this government.

I'm confident that the members of the justice committee will continue to do the work, make sure that there is a report available based on all the testimonies and evidence that they have heard over the last almost three years, and be able to give recommendations to the government when it comes to the siting of large energy infrastructure projects. We look forward to the committee finishing their work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Acting Premier, the people of Ontario want to know where this investigation is going. If you haven't asked the OPP for an update, well, I have. I've written a letter to Detective Constable Duval, asking him for an update.

Look: I'd be the last one to ever accuse this government of doing something underhanded, but it might be a

little more than coincidental that, since you got your majority, this OPP investigation has gone completely underground. We're not hearing anything about the criminal investigation into the destruction and deletion of emails within the Office of the Premier of Ontario.

So I'm asking you today: Will you endeavour to get an update from the OPP as to where this criminal investigation is going? Because the people of Ontario want an answer.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): If everyone would notice, I am standing and you're still carrying on.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I think it would be pretty polite and mild for me to say that the question from the member opposite is fairly absurd. I think he recognizes that there is a live police investigation that is under way and it would be highly inappropriate for any member of this House, especially members of the government, to be speaking about that police investigation. The member is a smart individual. He knows that very clearly. I think the question is highly inappropriate. Nor will we start engaging in the discussion around police investigations, because that is up to the OPP. They're arm's-length and independent from the government. We will let them finish their work.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. There's a growing trend for charitable organizations to give out gift cards to clients to help them buy Christmas gifts and groceries for the holidays. Giving gift cards is a more dignified approach to helping these vulnerable people because they don't have to line up at food banks or at Christmas hamper programs. But there is a grinch out there trying to steal Christmas. Money Mart has piloted an initiative in Hamilton whereby they will redeem these gift cards for cash but only at 50% of the card's value.

Why does this government allow grinch-like Money Mart to steal Christmas from our most vulnerable people in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As the member knows, there are a number of organizations in Ontario that have been regulated by our government. We've stepped up to enforce and increase regulations with these organizations. It is an ongoing challenge to ensure that the unscrupulous practices like you're talking about are—that we ensure that these individuals are put out of business or that there are greater regulations. We've increased protections under the Consumer Protection Act. We've increased the fines,

as well, for organizations and individuals who may conduct business like this.

As you are aware, our ministry did take very significant action to ensure that one of these organizations was put out of business because of their practices.

We are going to continue to be vigilant with respect to these organizations. We will continue to bring forward legislation and change regulations where necessary to ensure that these practices are dealt with.

I'd also indicate to this member that our government has eliminated the expiry dates on prepaid gift cards.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This is just one of the many areas where we've seen time and time again that the Payday Loans Act needs to be tightened up.

Forcing individuals who are already under a great deal of stress during the holidays to pay this extraordinarily high rate for an exchange is simply disgusting. I think everyone in this House agrees that this type of scheme that takes advantage of people who are already so vulnerable, particularly at this time of year, is not acceptable.

Is the minister's heart two sizes too small, that he won't ban these exorbitantly high exchange rates that allow payday lenders to take advantage of people like this? Will the minister do something to address this problem so that it doesn't happen?

Hon. David Orazietti: Absolutely. This is certainly not a partisan issue. I think we all agree that those individuals who are vulnerable and those individuals who may from time to time need to use these organizations to complete financial transactions—we want to ensure that they're not taken advantage of.

We have a cap on the maximum allowable borrowing rates in Ontario, and they are in about the middle of the range across the country, as the member knows full well. We brought in regulations to tighten up payday lending and deal very aggressively with an organization in this province that was practising beyond the scope of their licence; in other words, taking advantage, quite frankly, of vulnerable residents in the province of Ontario.

We will be responding to this. If the member has any specific information, I would be happy to speak to him about that as we continue to enforce these regulations.

1110

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the Minister of Finance. On Tuesday you announced that there will be amendments made to Ontario securities laws with a goal of promoting greater representation of women on the boards of publicly traded companies.

My constituents in the riding of Burlington and, indeed, I'm certain all Ontarians are very pleased with this announcement. Studies have shown that greater gender diversity on corporate boards will promote stronger organizational health and improved innovation, leadership growth and performance.

Having been fortunate enough to hold multiple senior-level positions, including those on publicly traded companies, prior to becoming an MPP, I take pride in this measure that our government is implementing. Minister, could you please tell this House why you are taking this important step?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the honourable member from Burlington for her very thoughtful question.

You know, Mr. Speaker, women make up 48% of the workforce and yet only account for 16% of board members. Through discussions and surveys conducted by the OSC, we've learned that 50% of responding companies have no women directors; moreover, women working at the remaining responding companies only account for 10% of women on senior levels. Further findings tell us that companies with a higher representation of women in executive-level positions experienced 35% higher return on equity and 34% higher total return to shareholders.

I agree with my caucus colleague that greater gender diversity promotes stronger organizational health, innovation, improved leadership and business performance. Mr. Speaker, that's why we're calling for this disclosure.

I think most of us in this House agree and recognize the great potential available for all of us by having more women in executive positions, and I am proud that we're taking these steps.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you to the minister for his response.

Research has indeed found that gender diversity in corporate leadership is linked to improved governance and stronger performance in both financial and non-financial measures. We know that increasing the number of women in corporate leadership is good for the economy and good for business. It's also good for society. That's why helping women reach their full potential by supporting women in leadership is part of this government's commitment to creating a strong and fair Ontario.

The minister responsible for women's issues has noted that this announcement is a critical step towards achieving gender equality across all sectors. Can the minister please tell us how these measures will serve to promote equality in leadership within the corporate world and beyond?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: As the Minister of Finance mentioned, women account for only 16% of members of Canada's FP500 companies, and that hasn't moved for a very, very long time. So when we tabled the 2013 Ontario budget, it included a commitment to broaden gender diversity in corporate leadership.

Last year, when we asked the Ontario Securities Commission to undertake the review and public consultation on this approach, we felt strongly that this was a policy that would encourage and support firms to increase the representation of women in corporate leadership.

What is quite remarkable and wonderful, Speaker, is that other Canadian regulators are now following Ontario's lead to comply or explain and are coordinating efforts with our Ontario Securities Commission. I'm very excited about this announcement and the positive change our government's action will take to bring corporate sector representation of women up higher.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services and outdated excuses. Minister, my office has been inundated—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

I would say to the member that in this Legislature, we have always respected each other and respected their titles. I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Carry on.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, my office has been inundated with calls this week after the problems with your new SAMS program were made public. These individuals have told us that the issues with the new software at Ontario Works and ODSP are far greater than your government is letting on.

We have obtained information that many front-line staff are taking stress leave, and, contrary to the earlier statements in the House, they're not seeing additional staff. They are taking time off due to their inability to help their clients and they are frustrated at not being able to do their job properly.

Minister, how many workers at ODSP and Ontario Works have taken stress leave due to your little glitch?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Certainly I'm delighted to hear that the member opposite is suddenly so concerned about front-line workers. I'm sure that those front-line workers were under considerable distress when your government cut social assistance rates by some 22%.

The member will know that we are supporting in every way those front-line workers. We have put in place hotlines; we have supportive staff to help—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The party that asks the question is the loudest. So obviously you don't want the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I think we need to understand this is a new system. At the end of the day, it will make the system overall much, much better. Caseworkers will be able to spend more time with their clients. We know that they are concerned for their clients. We're trying to support them in every way that we possibly can through the introduction of this new system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, at least the Premier has shown the decency to apologize to those who have been affected by these problems and not resorted to deflection in her responses, such as you have just done. It would be nice to see if you would show the same respect and courtesy to those employees.

Not only is the new software proving to be very problematic in the delivery of these services—it's so stressful that workers are taking time off—but when workers are taking time off due to a broken system, who knows how many other people will be affected by the shortage of front-line caseworkers as a result?

Minister, will you demonstrate transparency, accountability and openness, and a genuine respect for the people of Ontario, and bring yourself and your staff back to the estimates committee? Really, let's examine this little glitch in far greater detail, instead of just having deflection from this minister.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, as I've said before, I truly apologize to those individuals who have suffered hardship through this new computer system. I am working constantly, in terms of hearing from the front lines what those issues are. My ministry is in constant communication with all 257 offices that have had to introduce this very large system.

Certainly, as we work towards the next pay run, and being mindful in fact that the vast majority—some 500,000 people—did receive their payments on time this last pay run, we want to make that 100% this next pay run. There's no question about it. We are doing everything we can to ensure that that happens. We are offering support to front-line workers. We will be covering overtime costs for those workers, as I've assured many of my municipal colleagues. We want to get this right.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-term Care.

This Liberal government has promised again and again to fully inspect every long-term-care home by the end of this year. On April 15, the Deputy Premier said: "I stand by my earlier commitment that every long-term-care home in this province will have had that rigorous quality inspection by the end of this calendar year." But now, with just days to go, it has been revealed that 60% of long-term-care homes still haven't been inspected.

Why has this Liberal government broken its promise to protect seniors by failing to inspect each and every long-term-care home before the end of this year?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Associate Minister of Health.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I thank the member opposite for that question. It's a very important question.

I want to reassure this House that, indeed, by the end of this month we would have scheduled every last inspection in the long-term-care homes—all 633—and we look forward to completing them very shortly in the new year.

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Speaker, the main thing is the intent. If I may say this, the main thing here is we didn't want to just do them for the sake of doing them; we wanted to make sure we got it right. So, yes, they will be completed by the middle of January, and they will all be scheduled by the end of this month.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Scheduling inspections by the end of the year is not the same as was originally promised by the Deputy Premier, who said that in this province we will have had the rigorous quality inspections by the end of this year. That's a promise.

Speaker, it's outrageous that this government has dropped the ball and failed to conduct a resident quality inspection in 60% of long-term-care homes. That means seniors and their families don't have the protection this government promised.

But we know that when Liberals break a promise, they try to change the promise and hope no one notices. So on Tuesday—and it is apropos that the minister is responding to the supplementary—of this week, the associate minister backtracked as fast as she could and promised to schedule every inspection by the end of the year. That's a far cry from the Deputy Premier's assurances that these inspections would be completed this year. I understand that there was an FOI, so maybe that's why the backtracking this year.

Will the government own up to this broken promise and tell Ontarians that long-term-care residents' homes will be inspected—and assure the families that 60% of homes will have been inspected by the end of this year?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I guess the member opposite didn't listen to my answer, because if she had listened to my answer—

Interjections.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's unfortunate that we heard it.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Well, there's a difference between hearing and listening.

If you had just understood my answer—

Interjections.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I just want to say that by the middle of January, every last inspection will be done. There's a holiday season, and that is the reason. But the spirit is being respected.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. Minister, today is International Volunteer Day, our annual opportunity to thank those who have donated their time in an effort to better their communities. Ontario depends on not-for-profit organizations and their volunteers to deliver vital services and build strong, inclusive communities.

In my riding of Ajax-Pickering, a large number of constituents rely on volunteer services for after-school programs, religious services, many athletic clubs and organizations, seniors' programs and much more.

It is very important to my constituents, and all Ontarians, that volunteer programs like these are safeguarded. Could the minister tell us how the government of Ontario is supporting our volunteer initiatives across the province of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Ajax-Pickering for asking the question.

Speaker, International Volunteer Day is a great opportunity to recognize and to say thank you to the dedicated volunteers who help make Ontario great. Our government supports a number of programs to help encourage and promote volunteerism in Ontario. We know it is equally important to support activities that broaden understanding about volunteering in Ontario.

That is why, as part of the province's legacy plan for the Pan/Parapan American Games, our ministry will be working with the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network to create a certification program that recognizes skills acquired through a volunteer placement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you to the minister for letting us know about absolutely everything, including how our government is encouraging volunteerism in our province.

I'm happy to hear that the Pan Am volunteers will receive certification for their hard work at the games. Over 10,000 athletes and officials from 41 countries will be coming to our province next summer, and the eyes of the world will be on Ontario. The volunteers will be the backbone of the games, instrumental to delivering successful games. Volunteering is going to be a great experience.

Volunteers will have the opportunity to make friends from around the world, learn new skills and make a positive impact on their communities. I'm happy to believe that their hard work will be recognized by an official certification.

Could the minister please tell the members of this House—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There are several conversations going on in the House while the questions are being asked. I would ask those members to take it outside.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: For the sake of absolutely everything, I want to refer it to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and also the minister responsible for the Pan and Parapan American Games.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to start by thanking the volunteers who are with us here today. I know when I thank them—

Applause.

Hon. Michael Coteau: One of the greatest legacies of these games is our volunteers and the skills that they'll be able to acquire during the games. In fact, they'll be able to take those skills and transfer them to other not-for-profit work, volunteerism and of course employment.

One of the best parts about the volunteer training that we're providing is the accessibility training. We're going to have over 23,000 people greet our spectators, our sport athletes and our visitors to really help every single person of all abilities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to remind the gallery: We do love you being here, but you're not allowed to participate in the debate by cheering or clapping. I'd ask you to keep order.

MUNICIPALITIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): New question, the member from—

Interjections: Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You used to be the only one to get it right.

My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Since being elected, I have continually heard from my rural municipal leaders about the challenges with the unpredictable and declining Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. This year, my upper- and lower-tier municipalities will see a 20% cut in their OMPF funding for the upcoming year, money that could go to critical infrastructure projects.

I find it interesting that the government website states that the 2015 OMPF funding has been designed to increase targeted support to those municipalities with the most challenging fiscal circumstances. Southwold, in my riding, lost over 50% of their tax base when Ford closed, and as a result the local council has announced that taxes will rise by 45% over the next three years. However, their OMPF funding was also cut 20%.

Minister, how do you define "challenging fiscal circumstances"? Is it your plan to balance the budget on the backs of rural municipalities?

Hon. Jeff Leal: This is an interesting question. It's interesting from the perspective of the party who downloaded, who had an exercise called Who Does What, which became the "Who got done in" exercise. Municipalities got done in; that's the history of the party opposite.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me continue, Mr. Speaker. Through extensive consultation with ROMA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and the Ontario municipal association, we've gone to a formula now of \$15 billion, that provides a set amount every year to municipalities right across the province of Ontario. This is something that municipalities asked for; this is something that we deliver for municipalities. It makes sense. It's a good program. It addresses critical infrastructure needs—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Answer.

Hon. Jeff Leal:—municipalities right across Ontario.
The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, you're talking about policies and decisions made over 15 years ago, and since then you've done nothing to correct them. It's reflected in the election: We are the voice of rural Ontario, on this side of the House. You've got to start listening.

1130

Your government has mismanaged taxpayers' money for over a decade, and rural municipalities and their residents are paying for it. Under your government, my riding has lost over 6,000 manufacturing jobs and an enormous amount of tax base for my municipalities. Yet, your government continues to cut the OMPF funding.

My rural municipalities do not receive any of the gas tax money, but would like access to it in order to deal with their enormous infrastructure deficits. Rural municipalities in my riding would like to see a three-to-five year projection of their individual OMPF funding allocations so they can prepare their budgets accordingly.

Minister, you're either not standing up for rural Ontario in cabinet or you're being completely ignored. Which is it?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, back in 2008, the then Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the wonderful mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, negotiated an unprecedented deal for uploading the services right across Ontario. The services that this party downloaded during their time in government effectively crippled municipal finances right across the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, come to order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, our government has listened to municipalities through the 2015 program. We will continue to recognize the challenges of northern and rural municipalities, and better target those with challenging fiscal circumstances. That's why this year the province will be providing \$515 million to 388 municipalities across this province.

Our government has a record of helping municipalities right across Ontario, in comparison to the—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please. The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, you're warned.

New question.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, this week, we heard yet another deeply disturbing story of a family being torn apart due to the inadequate developmental services available for children in Ontario. Nine-year-old Niko Leduc suffers from a severe case of reactive detachment disorder, which causes him to be extremely violent

and act out self-destructively. Due to the extremely serious nature of his problems, there is nowhere even close to his Greater Sudbury home that can provide the intensive treatment he needs. Niko's mother, Dr. Nicole Desmarais, has been told that the only way her son can get the care he needs is by making him a crown ward.

Minister, do you believe taking this child away from his mother is an acceptable response to the plight of his family?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. As she knows, I can't discuss the specifics of cases, but I'm always happy to talk with her generally about what we're doing both in developmental services for children and child welfare. On the developmental services front, there have been a number of investments made. In fact, an additional \$5 million this year to reduce wait-lists—

Interjections.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles:—\$5 million this year, Speaker, to reduce wait-lists for different services, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech-language therapy. These new investments will bring the total for children's rehab services to \$104 million.

Speaker, I know that the member opposite is very interested in the work of our children's aid societies. They do an excellent job each and every day protecting the safety and security of our children, and I welcome further question in the supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, first, I would like to remind this minister of a report from the Ombudsman, in May 2005, called *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. Where are families supposed to go? This is absolutely unacceptable.

Niko is scheduled to come home tomorrow with absolutely no supports. This family is up against a brick wall now. Their son desperately needs specialized care, but he also relies on the loving attention of his mother.

If a child with a physical impairment required treatment, we wouldn't dream of making that child a crown ward. Why is a child with mental health problems treated differently? Does the minister believe that children who need mental health treatment should be treated the same as children with physical health challenges and have the ongoing support of their family?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I absolutely believe that children and youth with mental health issues should be treated in as timely and as accessible a way as other persons with illnesses and injuries. That's why I recently announced the creation of 14 children's mental health lead agencies across the province to coordinate those programs and services, so that families and children can go to one place to get the services in the community that they need.

We know that 70% of mental health issues start in childhood and adolescence. We know that one in five adults has a mental health issue. Our investments in our comprehensive mental health program are extensive—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: —and the lead agencies I've announced are going to be coordinating that service, helping families navigate.

Next year, I will be announcing more lead agencies, for a total of 34 lead agencies across the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Sit down, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: Shame on you. What if it was your child?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton Mountain, you are now warned.

New question.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. December 6 is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. This day was established by Canada's Parliament in 1991 to ensure that Canadians would never forget the tragic deaths of 14 young women who were murdered at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal on December 6, 1989. As we mourn the loss of these women today, we are also reminded of all women and girls for whom violence and the threat of violence are daily realities.

Minister, the Premier has placed upon your directorate the responsibility for continuing the work of leading our government's efforts to prevent gender-based violence, with the goal of an Ontario where all women live free from the threat, fear or experience of violence. What initiatives has your directorate implemented to raise awareness of violence against women, strengthen support for victims and focus on prevention?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Davenport for raising this very important issue and raising awareness on this important day. As I've talked about before in this House, our government has increased funding for community services that help deal with domestic violence. That increase has been 55% since 2003, and we actually began these investments at a time when the former government was cutting services, such as to women's shelters. In 2013-14, we're investing \$142 million into these very important services.

I was with the Premier this morning to announce a package of initiatives to raise awareness of sexual violence and harassment; to enhance prevention initiatives to combat sexual discrimination, harassment and violence; and to improve support for victims of sexual assault and harassment. We remain very much committed to an Ontario free of domestic violence and sexual violence, because we believe that every woman has a right to feel safe and secure, wherever they may be.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Minister. I think this government has demonstrated that women and their children in crisis are a priority. Recently, there has been a very bright light shone on the importance of supporting women suffering from abuse and harassment, but the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women reminds us that this is a difficult problem that has been troubling society and its victims for a very long time.

Sometimes there is a lack of awareness or information as to the availability or accessibility of resources out there. In Davenport, several not-for-profit organizations provide shelter and counselling for women who have suffered domestic violence. For example, Abrigo and the South Asian Women's Centre both offer a positive environment where women facing abuse can receive a wide array of support.

Constituents in my riding of Davenport and advocates have expressed interest in knowing exactly how the government is addressing the needs of women and children at risk. Minister, could you please explain what services and supports are available to women and their children suffering from threats of domestic violence and abuse?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

1140

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As recognized by the minister responsible for women's issues, and through the leadership of our Premier, supporting women who have suffered from sexual and domestic violence is very important to our government. We fund over 200 agencies across the province dedicated to assisting women experiencing violence. In the last year, over 18,000 women and children were served at one of the 96 emergency shelters funded by the government. Over 49,000 women and children visited one of the 177 government-funded counselling agencies that provide crisis/support counselling, sexual assault counselling and long-term therapeutic counselling. Over 55,000 calls from women in need were answered by one of the provincial crisis helplines that are available 24/7.

As we reflect on the unfortunate examples of domestic and sexual violence and from my conversations with the staff of these hard-working agencies, we understand the impact these support services can have on an individual's life and the need for our work to continue.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Fire Chief Cynthia Ross Tustin of the Essa fire department from my riding of Simcoe-Grey is Ontario's leading voice in support of the rural residential sprinkler campaign. Minister, I believe Chief Tustin has raised this matter with you directly.

As you know, rural firefighters face several different challenges than their urban colleagues, including longer travel times over greater distances and the need to bring their own water supply to put out fires in most cases.

Sprinkler systems in rural homes would improve public safety and the ability of rural firefighters to do their jobs.

Minister, will your ministry implement Chief Tustin's request to help reduce costs for rural Ontarians who want to install sprinklers in their homes?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for asking a very important question. He's absolutely right. I had a great opportunity to meet with the chief of Essa at the plowing match. She was very generous with her time and gave me a very good tour of a model home that demonstrated the different kinds of technologies that exist when it comes to residential sprinklers that could help, of course, in making sure that our homes are safe and communities are safe as well.

As a result of that conversation, of course, we've followed up, and we're working with the chief in looking into the matter and having a very engaging conversation to see what next steps we need to take to ensure that our homes are safe in our communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the minister: The rural residential sprinkler campaign builds on other practical and responsible public safety measures adopted by this House, like smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Chief Tustin has discussed with you the idea of establishing a tax credit or other incentives to encourage people living in rural areas to install a fire sprinkler system in their home on a voluntary basis. Such incentives could be similar to existing tax credits to encourage people to make their homes more energy efficient, for example.

Minister, on behalf of rural residents and their brave local firefighters, will the government take steps to reduce costs for rural Ontarians who want to install sprinklers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member. He's absolutely right. I have to give credit to the chief from Essa for really doing her due diligence. She has done a lot of good work in that regard, and she has come up with very constructive solutions as to how we can enable homeowners to be able to put fire sprinklers in their homes. She has done tremendous work. We are very much engaged with her in ensuring that we find ways to prevent fires, to make sure that our homes are safe.

We are very proud of the fact that we have made sprinklers mandatory in multi-unit residential buildings and in care facilities as well. Perhaps this is the next step, and I look forward to working with the chief on this matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Considering the use of the clock today, I would ask you to extend question period and allow us to do our question that we should have got in.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That is not a point of order.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Hamilton

Mountain has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Children and Youth Services concerning developmental health services for children. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I just noticed that a very dynamic young man from my community of Ottawa Centre is in the House. I want to welcome Fritz Okrah to Queen's Park. Great to see you, Fritz.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the government—the opposition leader.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, I'll be in government soon. Three and a half years, folks.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent that the orders for second and third reading of Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day, be called immediately and that the question on the motions for second and third reading of the bill be put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member seeks unanimous consent to move a motion on Bill 16. Agreed? I hear a no.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Actually, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to welcome a guest who is up in the lobby upstairs, one of the most exciting athletes to ever take the field in the Canadian Football League. Mike "Pinball" Clemons is in the House today. Welcome.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I only wish he had been playing for the Ticats last week.

DEFERRED VOTES

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY
GENERATING FACILITIES
AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX,
DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court

security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask all members to take their seats.

On November 25, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 35. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Gretzky, Lisa

Hardeman, Ernie
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Hoggarth, Ann
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLeod, Lisa
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina
Martow, Gila
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonnell, Jim
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia

Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
Oraziotti, David
Pettapiece, Randy
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Vernile, Daiene
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 91; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 3, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for—

Mr. Steve Clark: Nepean—Carleton.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): — Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to invite all members to the front lawn. There are going to be members of the taxi industry from the city of Toronto there today, and I'm sure they'd like to hear from their representatives.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I would like to introduce a visitor who has just arrived here at the Legislature: my daughter. Her name is Claire Matlock, and she's a third-year student at the University of Waterloo.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: They're not here yet because they're stuck in a lineup, but Zulfiqar Ali and Majeed Shidfar worked very, very hard on my campaign. They're taxi drivers who live and work in my neighbourhood. They're here with Christine Gail, Beck cabs, to see an introduction of a private member's bill. I welcome them, when they arrive.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JEAN BÉLIVEAU

Mr. Todd Smith: Yesterday, we lost a hockey legend. For anyone who grew up watching hockey in this country, Jean Béliveau stood as a monument to the game at its very best. There is only one Big Jean Béliveau.

Over the years, he came to personify the heights of character and heart in his sport while doing so for the franchise that dominated it, and I say that as a Toronto Maple Leafs fan.

Rising above the petty jealousies that are too often directed at dominant teams, fans of all stripes gave Béliveau only the highest regard and esteem. In this regard, in the pantheon of sport, he's matched only by Joe DiMaggio.

Jean Béliveau is remembered almost more for his unmatched class and leadership off the ice than he is for his play. That's quite a statement for the guy who, to this day, is the all-time leading scorer for the most storied franchise in hockey history.

Yesterday, a quote from former teammate Rejean Houle was the quote of the day at NHL.com: "When I came on the team in 1970-71, I came in the room and I said, 'Hi, Mr. Béliveau.' He said, 'Look, don't call me Mr. Béliveau. We're going to play together. You can call

me Jean.' I always had a problem getting his name to be Jean. For me it was always Mr. Béliveau."

I had the chance to meet Jean Béliveau on numerous occasions: once when he was doing his book tour—he signed a book for my dad, who is a big Jean Béliveau fan—and I interviewed him several times in my previous job as a radio broadcaster.

Losing Jean Béliveau was a loss for more than Habs fans; losing Jean Béliveau was a loss for the country.

BELLA LEACH

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today I'm honoured to take this opportunity to acknowledge a very special woman in my riding who has devoted her life to helping others. With tomorrow being International Volunteer Day, I feel it's imperative to acknowledge Bella Leach and her many contributions.

This year, Bella Leach received a Volunteer Service Award from the province of Ontario, honouring over 50 years of dedicated service to St. Joseph's Health Care in London.

As a young girl, Bella dreamed of being a nurse, so when she was older, volunteering at the hospital seemed like a natural match.

Bella has volunteered in many capacities within the hospital, always giving everything she could to help people she saw going through difficult times.

An accomplished artist who works in many mediums, including pottery, stained glass, embroidery, doll-making and many more, Bella has always loved to share her talents with those around her. At the hospital, she would crochet multicoloured butterflies to adorn the incubators of newborn infants, as well as make finger puppets for young children and soft dolls for children to cuddle before and after surgery.

Always wanting to give more, Bella also volunteered with other patients in the hospital. She helped on the in-patient floors, assisted patients with walking, eating or personal care, all the while providing a friendly and encouraging smile to everyone she met.

Bella's passion and commitment to helping others is an inspiration to me and to all those who have the privilege of meeting her.

I would like to thank Bella, on behalf of all those she has helped in the past 50 years—and the years to come—for her kindness and generous spirit.

BABCOCK AND WILCOX

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My riding of Cambridge is built on a foundation of manufacturing, and I rise today to speak about one company in particular which exemplifies the industrial heritage of my community.

Babcock and Wilcox Canada's Cambridge facility was established in 1844 and has grown from a small foundry, manufacturing industrial machinery, to a world leader in the design, engineering, manufacture, construction and service of steam-generation equipment.

For over 170 years, Babcock and Wilcox has been a staple of Cambridge's manufacturing sector. Today, they employ over 650 people at their Cambridge facility.

Speaker, last Thursday in Cambridge, I was pleased to be on the factory floor to see the signing of a long-term master service agreement between Babcock and Wilcox and Bruce Power. This agreement, which president John MacQuarrie called one of the biggest service contracts they've ever signed, will provide an anticipated value of over \$300 million and represents more than 100 new jobs at the Cambridge facility.

Speaker, I'm always pleased to stand in this House and highlight the robust manufacturing companies that we have in Cambridge and to speak about the positive success and growth in my community. As a matter of fact, advanced manufacturing in Cambridge has grown by 4% in the last couple of years. It was wonderful for the employees to hear so much praise for their high-quality workmanship.

TERRY SANDERSON

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'd like to take this moment to speak of the tremendous loss of lacrosse great Terry Sanderson. Terry Sanderson passed away on Thursday, November 27. Terry was an icon in the lacrosse world in Dufferin-Caledon, Ontario, nationally and internationally. His presence will be missed by the entire National Lacrosse League. The commissioner of the NLL, George Daniel, said "Terry Sanderson was a giant in the sport," and he was absolutely right.

As a player, coach and executive, Terry's influence on the game was instrumental. His successes included a national championship, three senior B titles, two Mann Cups and three Minto Cups. But more than these successes, since 1972, Terry turned the game of lacrosse into a lifelong passion. He inspired hundreds of players, coaches and fans throughout his career.

He was an obvious choice for the first inductee of the Orangeville Sports Hall of Fame in 2005 because of his legacy with Orangeville Northmen as a player and coach. He will also be greatly missed by his current team, the Toronto Rock.

Those who knew Terry understood his passion for the game. A former teammate described him best in our local newspaper as "Mr. Lacrosse."

I would like to offer my deepest sympathies to the Sanderson family for the sudden and tragic death of Terry Sanderson. He will be missed.

ARTS EDUCATION

Ms. Jennifer K. French: One of the most beautiful things about Queen's Park is the ever-changing art and culture on the walls and in the halls. Right now, visitors to Queen's Park can enjoy the incredible art of young Ontarians being showcased through the Youth Arts Program that was launched in 2012.

As we know, I am coming to the Legislature by way of the classroom, where youthful expression is always on display. Last year, my intermediate students had the opportunity to participate in an Ontario Arts Council program called ArtsSmarts. ArtsSmarts partners local artists and educators, and the goal is to reach all learners. Students can be engaged and be creative in exciting new ways.

My students worked with local photographer and artist Colin Burwell, and I am pleased to be able to welcome Colin to Queen's Park today. Colin came to our school and took photos to create a piece of art. He captured not only the students but their own creative representation of what hope looks like in their world. He shared not only their messages but gave voice to children from an underprivileged community with important things to say. Together, they created a striking canvas of black and white images of themselves and their messages. This canvas hangs at Glen Street Public School in Oshawa as a tribute to hope, creativity and resilience.

There is also a canvas that hangs in my office here at Queen's Park. It is both a beautiful piece of art and an anchor to the important reasons we are all here: the hopeful future of our province. My door is always open in the office. Come visit, come see my students and appreciate their enduring optimism and hope. And as we spend time here at Queen's Park, let's remember to take the time to appreciate the art, history and rich stories that surround us.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Last week, I had the privilege of travelling to Windsor on behalf of Minister Chan to attend two regional Minister's Employers Tables. While I was there in that great city, I had the opportunity to visit a number of organizations working to integrate newcomers to our province.

In Windsor, I saw the incredible work going on at the Mason Educational Centre, which is an adult learning centre for the Greater Essex County District School Board. I also had the pleasure of meeting the member from Windsor-Tecumseh's wife, who is a school board trustee there. The Mason centre runs adult non-credit English as a second-language programs for recent immigrants to Ontario, offering these newcomers an opportunity to earn a language certificate that can be used for their federal citizenship applications. One of the students at the Mason centre told me that it was an excellent school because, "Here, the teachers teach from the heart."

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I also visited the Windsor campus of Collège Boréal and toured their impressive facility. The college, which supports mainly newcomers from Congo, Haiti, Burundi, Rwanda and Syria, provides adult language classes, settlement assistance, employment programs and bridge training. I heard from one staff member and clients about the importance of this kind of one-stop shop, where new immigrants can learn English or French, get guidance on

opportunities for employment and even participate in practice interviews—all while their kids are in the day-care centre down the hall. They're also able to meet others who are all experiencing the same thing.

I'm proud that the government is funding, and continues to fund, these crucial programs, and I look forward to seeing more newcomer settlement agencies across the province.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION DAY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to help celebrate Wildlife Conservation Day. Wildlife Conservation Day promotes the conservation and protection of threatened species, specifically elephants, rhinos and tigers. It raises public awareness regarding the harmful security, economic and environmental effects of wildlife poaching and trafficking. Many populations consider some charismatic species as part of their natural heritage, and these species often provide revenues from tourism that not only contribute to local economies but also to the continuity of conservation efforts.

However, overexploitation puts the survival of many wildlife species at risk. Once these wildlife species have been wiped from their native towns and villages, these areas suffer terrible damages and experience a decline in their economies by becoming irrelevant wildlife tourism destinations.

Not only is wildlife being killed, but park rangers are also getting caught in the line of fire by the poachers that they are trying to stop. Once a poacher does escape, though, they traffic unscreened wildlife and wildlife parts across the world, which increases the risk of human health pandemics. Therefore, wildlife poaching and trafficking affects everything from biodiversity to park rangers to citizens across the world.

This global occasion, World Wildlife Conservation Day, provides everyone with the opportunity to learn more about wildlife conservation and to be part of the solution to wildlife crime in our future.

MILTON SOCCER ACADEMY

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Last Saturday, I attended an event in my riding to celebrate the incredible contributions made by parents, coaches, referees and other volunteers associated with the Milton Soccer Academy. The academy was originally founded in September 2004 as a non-profit organization by Uwe Samstag-Schnock, Dolly Pawlak and Michael Walter. It started with a small group of 24 players aged 9 to 11 and has since expanded to cater to an array of boys, girls, men and women at a variety of skill levels and age groups. Indoor soccer is even available through the winter.

My kids have been involved with this academy over the years, and it has since become an important part of our growing community in Halton. It keeps us feeling young, healthy and active. But perhaps most importantly,

it brings people together. Out on the field, we build new relationships, learn about teamwork and make new friends.

That night was really about celebrating the people behind the scenes: the people who have selflessly volunteered their time and their talents so that people can have the chance to get out, compete and play a sport that they love.

Making a difference through volunteering starts with one simple act: the act of deciding that you care and that you want to have a positive impact on your community. I think we should all be proud to live in a province where the spirit of volunteerism is so strong.

Speaker, I want to thank you for having us speak here today, and I want to thank the volunteers who were there that evening for coming out and showing their support for a wonderful club.

PAPAL AWARDS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Last week, four Waterloo region residents were recognized by His Holiness Pope Francis with papal honours for their remarkable contributions to our community. They are among 15 people in our diocese to receive this very distinguished honour.

Joe and Stephanie Mancini, whom I've known for a very long time, were each awarded the Bene Merenti Medal for the Working Centre. This is a very unique facility in downtown Kitchener that was founded by the Mancinis more than 30 years ago. They provide a daily soup kitchen, housing, a job search resource centre, used computers, second-hand furniture, used bicycles for those in need and many other programs, all targeted at eliminating poverty.

The Bene Merenti Medal was also awarded to palliative care specialist Dr. Donna Ward for her commitment to dying patients. She has worked with a number of hospitals and local organizations, advancing palliative care programs, and she has also served at the Grand River Regional Cancer Centre from 1989 to 2009.

Finally, Shari Guinta received a papal honour for her work with affordable housing and for her profound contributions to the national council of the Catholic Women's League.

Mr. Speaker, I am so honoured to represent a riding that is home to such caring constituents, and I hope that their contributions to my community will inspire others there to do great things as well.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 21, An Act to safeguard health care integrity by enacting the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014 and by amending certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / *Projet de loi 21, Loi visant à sauvegarder l'intégrité des soins de santé par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur le don de sang volontaire et la modification de certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 25, 2014, the bill is ordered for third reading.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley: Before we introduce bills, a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Deputy government House leader.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was waiting for you to do that.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The House leader of the NDP was waiting for me to do this.

I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to do the proceedings in the following manner: Statements by ministries and responses, followed by petitions.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, that's what we usually do.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Sorry—following petitions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The deputy government House leader seeks unanimous consent to move a motion regarding today's proceedings. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BANDIT TAXI CAB SAFETY AND ENFORCEMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LES TAXIS PIRATES (SÉCURITÉ ET EXÉCUTION)

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the transportation of passengers for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization / *Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant le Code de la route à l'égard du transport de passagers moyennant rémunération sans permis de conduire, certificat d'immatriculation ou autorisation.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This bill is being put forward today by me as a result of a decades-long issue in the city of Ottawa and other places in Ontario, where we have been dealing with bandit or so-called “gypsy” cabs, illegal taxi cabs that have on occasion resulted in sexual assault of and violence against women, and convictions to that extent.

This bill would amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to offences related to picking up a passenger for the purpose of transporting him or her for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization. The bill gives municipal law enforcement officers the power to stop motor vehicles, request the surrender of a licence, permit or authorization and request identification to enforce these offences.

The fines for the offences are increased. In addition, the bill provides for administrative impounds of motor vehicles if an officer believes that a person has picked up a passenger for the purpose of transporting him or her for compensation without a licence, a permit or authorization.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Notwithstanding what I believe will be support for the bill, I think the member may have used untraditional language in referring to bandit cabs by what I would consider an unfortunate ethnic representation.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I don't believe so.

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PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

“Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

“Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

This was just in the news; we have a situation in my riding that breaks your heart. I totally agree with this petition, and I'll send it to the desk with Joshua.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

“Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the following actions:

“(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;

“(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

“(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario.”

I couldn't agree more with this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Ethan to take to the table.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

“—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I agree with this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Kelsey to bring forward.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas patient care and services at rural and smaller hospitals across Ontario, including at Wingham and District Hospital, are being adversely affected by too low provincial funding for hospitals;

"Whereas too low funding is resulting in widespread service and bed closures and nursing and other hospital staffing cuts;

"Whereas the Wingham and District Hospital is not receiving appropriate funding to meet the needs of the community;

"Whereas to deal with provincial underfunding for hospitals, the Wingham and District Hospital is now cutting services and front line hospital staff;

"Whereas service and staff cuts at the Wingham and District Hospital will have a negative impact on patient care and threaten the future viability of our local hospital;

"Whereas broad policy shifts for health care are moving services out of smaller community hospitals like Wingham and District Hospital into larger hospital centres. This is forcing local residents to travel out of the community to access needed health services once available at their local hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To stop the service and staff cuts at the Wingham and District Hospital;

"(2) To increase the level of funding to the Wingham and District Hospital so that the hospital can:

"— maintain services that patients need;

"—ensure adequate staffing levels to support quality patient care;

"—continue to provide patients with local access to quality health services so they don't have to go out of the community to access the health services they need."

I'll affix my signature to this petition and send it to the desk with Hannah.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas social assistance benefits in Ontario leave recipients far below the poverty line, struggling to meet the basic costs of living, and without any resources to handle emergencies;

"Whereas the provincial government recently cut the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit;

"Whereas the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit helped families pay for basic utilities in emergency situations and helped prevent people from becoming homeless;

"Whereas this program provided options for vulnerable people including women, children and people with disabilities to escape domestic violence and transition to safer housing;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario restore full funding for the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit and ensure that it goes directly to those who need it."

I sign this petition and give it to the page Moiz to deliver.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I couldn't agree more with this petition. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Mikaila.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but the scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of its professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I totally agree with this petition, will affix my signature and I'll send it to the desk with Ethan.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Granville Anderson: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada; and

"Whereas scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verifiable tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario, to provide all that is necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have all diagnostic and successful treatment protocols, including natural remedies, available to patients and physicians."

I agree with this petition, and I will affix my name to it and give it to page Hannah.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"In light of the many wide-ranging concerns being raised by Ontario citizens and 80-plus action groups across Ontario and the irrefutable international evidence of a flawed technology, health concerns, environmental effects, bird and bat kills, property losses, the tearing apart of families, friends and communities, and unprecedented costs;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to declare an Ontario-wide moratorium on the development of wind farms."

I agree with this petition, and I will send it to the desk with Mikaila.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer's disease is progressive, worsens over time and will eventually lead to death;

"Whereas there is an estimated 208,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease creates emotional, social and economic burdens on the family and supports of those suffering with the disease—over 25% of those providing personal supports to survivors of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia are seniors;

"Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020; and

"Whereas Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementia has not been revised since the implementation of a five-year strategy in 1999;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately review, revise and implement an updated, research-informed, comprehensive strategy to respond to and prepare for the rapidly growing needs of those living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia."

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Noah to take to the table.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition on ending coal for cleaner air in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians have growing concerns surrounding climate change and the quality of our air, it is integral that more is done to provide Ontarians with cleaner air;

"Whereas the combustion of coal to generate electricity is conducive toward higher levels of carbon dioxide emissions, which pollute the air and contribute immensely toward climate change;

"Whereas the cessation of coal use as a means of generating electricity in the Atikokan, Lambton, Nanticoke, and Thunder Bay generating facilities will result in cleaner air for Ontarians, which will ensure the long-term preservation of our air, environment, and public health;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, to stop generating facilities from using coal to produce electricity, which will eliminate high levels of

carbon dioxide emissions and will in turn ensure cleaner air for Ontarians now and for future generations.”

I happily sign this petition, and I shall give it to Kelsey.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was pleased to work with the Alzheimer Society on this petition, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

I’ve affixed my signature as well, Mr. Speaker.

VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Mr. Speaker, if you would indulge me, my friends from the taxi industry whom I introduced earlier are now in the House. They’re here with other representatives of the taxi industry to witness the introduction of a private member’s bill. We welcome you to the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would like all members in the Legislature to join me in wel-

coming Mr. Doug Reyecraft, in the east members’ gallery, the member for Middlesex in the 33rd and 34th Parliaments. Welcome.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Hon. Michael Chan: Tomorrow, December 5, is International Volunteer Day. In 1985, the United Nations General Assembly designated December 5 as Volunteer Day, to shine a light on the contributions volunteers make locally, nationally, and globally. It’s a day for all of us to celebrate the positive impact that volunteering has on communities all over the world.

Giving the precious gift of time to help others is true generosity. In Ontario, more than five million selfless people give their time and energy to help their neighbours and communities every year.

Volunteers demonstrate the true meaning of citizenship. We are very lucky in Ontario to have a high level of civic engagement, and I take pride in recognizing the amazing work of our volunteers.

Our government has established a number of recognition programs, including the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards, the June Callwood awards, the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers and the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. For example, in the 2014 volunteer service awards, we recognized more than 11,000 Ontarians.

It’s also important to nurture the volunteer spirit in our young people. They are the future. One way we do this is through ChangeTheWorld: Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge. In 2014, more than 39,000 young people took part in more than 700 volunteer events across the province.

ChangeTheWorld is both a great way to earn the volunteer hours needed to graduate from high school and a wonderful way to start a lifetime of volunteering.

Another great opportunity for volunteering is the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games. Some 23,000 volunteers will be part of an exceptional, once-in-a-lifetime experience, while receiving specialized training that will help build their careers.

Earlier today, Speaker, in the gallery we were joined by 40 of these volunteers, who will help make the games a memorable experience for 1.4 million spectators and 10,000 athletes and officials from 41 nations across the Americas and the Caribbean.

Welcome to the House. We love you.

We are also looking for ways to help Ontario’s newcomers use their experience and skills by volunteering. Almost 40% of newcomers to Canada come to Ontario, and when they volunteer, they can help a diverse range of people and connect to their community.

On this International Volunteer Day, please join me in thanking Ontario’s many, many volunteers for their

wonderful contributions to people and communities across the province.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: This coming Saturday is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. December 6 marks 25 years since the 1989 murder of 14 young women at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal by a man who claimed to be fighting feminism.

Red rose buttons have been distributed in memory of the 14 young women whose lives ended in an act of gender-based violence that absolutely shocked the nation. Today we take time to reflect on those last 25 years and commit to preventing gender-based violence in the future.

In addition to the 14 Montreal women lost, many other lives continue to be lost to gender-based violence. Today there are 1,181 missing and murdered aboriginal women in this country. We know that last year, too many women in Ontario lost their lives as a result of gender-based violence. They, too, must be remembered.

In recent weeks, violence against women has dominated media and public conversation, but this is not a recent issue. It's a long-standing one, and it crosses all cultures, classes and sectors. While progress is being made, transforming entrenched attitudes and behaviours takes time. Together we must recognize the inequality that women face and take action against it.

Gender-based violence takes place in homes, schools, workplaces, and across communities. It comes in many forms: physical, sexual and psychological. These are all preventable, and they must stop, with our collective commitment.

It's estimated that one in three Canadian women will experience sexual assault in their lifetime, and nearly half of Canadians know at least one woman who has been sexually or physically assaulted. These statistics are completely devastating and unacceptable. This could be a woman sitting beside you on the subway, a colleague or a family member. It could even be anyone here.

Violence can sometimes go unseen and unnoticed, devastating the lives it touches. We also know that violence against women is significantly underreported for a number of reasons. We must challenge the social norms that perpetuate this silence, and provide appropriate support to victims.

In Ontario, we are focused on working with our community partners and other government ministries to end violence against women. Over the past three decades, the Ontario Women's Directorate has played, and continues to play, an important role in effecting and influencing positive change for women's equality here in Ontario.

We have implemented many initiatives under our domestic violence and sexual violence action plans to prevent violence against women and strengthen support for victims. This includes public education campaigns in

diverse communities across Ontario, which equip those closest to a woman with the skills to identify the signs of violence and to intervene effectively. We have also trained over 37,000 front-line professionals and service providers to detect domestic and sexual violence and to support those victims.

As we mourn the loss of all women lost to violence, I challenge all of us to take action against violence against women and inequality in our own communities. By recognizing inequality and encouraging change, we can make a difference. Let's bring violence against women out of the shadows and into the light of day, where we can work together to end it once and for all.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise today to speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Exactly 25 years ago, on December 6, 1989, 14 young women were killed at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal.

These smart young women were engineering students. They were full of promise, preparing for interesting, challenging careers. Like previous generations of women, they were poised to make a difference in what had previously been a male-dominated profession. Tragically, these 14 young women were killed because they were women.

It is an occasion to remember the women murdered, and it's important for all of us to recommit to ensuring that their deaths were not in vain. As we mourn the loss of the students at École Polytechnique, it is important for us to be mindful that many women and girls have been murdered or abused since then. We know the majority of men do not use or condone violence, but most of the violence in Canada is committed by men.

The statistics are alarming. Statistics Canada reports that women are three times more likely than men to be killed, sexually assaulted or threatened with a weapon by a male partner. According to YWCA Canada, there are 460,000 sexual assaults in Canada every year. Only 33 of every 1,000 sexual assault cases are reported to the police, and 29 are recorded as a crime. These numbers speak volumes about how many assailants walk free and why women may be afraid to press charges against their abusers.

Violence against women continues to be part of our present, as we have seen throughout the media in the past several weeks. Because of these high-profile cases, we've all been forced to confront an ugly elephant in the room that has been ignored for far too long. Sexual harassment and assault is not an isolated occurrence. It's not something that only affects vulnerable women. It affects all of us. It's time that we acknowledge this fact and find a way to deal with it.

It is encouraging when more victims of sexual assault are finding the strength to speak up and share their experience. Each person who comes forward to tell their

story is lending their voice to those victims still silenced and tormented by such abuse. We need to continue to work to end violence against women and girls as part of our commitment to women's equality. It's important for all of us in this chamber, as policy-makers and community members, to participate in the critical work of creating a society where domestic violence is no longer viewed as an inevitable social ill. Together, we must take action to build a healthier society, to foster resilience and to prevent domestic violence before it occurs.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my honour to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to mark International Volunteer Day. It doesn't take very long for us to be in this chamber and listen to the 90-second statements that all of us give on a weekly basis, to learn very quickly that our communities thrive and our communities are unique and special because of the volunteer commitments that people make. I love the comment our Governor General, David Johnston, makes, that whether you give your time, your talent or your treasure, thank you for your volunteerism.

It's such an easy thing for us to give, and in this season of giving, I think it's very important that we remember that in our own communities it's the Kinsmen who put on the Santa Claus parades, it's the Lions who fundraise and ensure that we have service animals, it's the Rotary Club volunteers who are working so hard to eradicate polio around the world. We really do need to acknowledge and thank them.

I often am told, "I don't volunteer because I want thanks." Conversely, we as legislators, we as leaders in our community, need to acknowledge that the work they do makes our communities special, makes our communities grow. We need to encourage that volunteerism, because we're not all the same. Every one of our communities has special festivals and special programs in place. I think of my own with Family Transition Place: many, many volunteers helping women get out of abusive situations; volunteering in the schools to make sure our young people know that abuse is not the norm. We have to encourage that, and we have to continue to enable and foster it in any way we can.

It is a great honour to join the minister and say thank you to our outstanding volunteers.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Peggy Sattler: For every generation, there is a defining moment, a moment that is seared into our collective consciousness and shapes the way we see the world. For many of us in this Legislature, that moment was December 6, 1989, the day that 14 young women were systematically separated from their male classmates and murdered at École Polytechnique in Montreal.

I remember the shock and incomprehension as I heard the news, the anger and the sorrow as I realized how inextricably bound I was to these 14 women because of

my age, because of my gender, because of my belief in my right to full and equal participation in economic and civic life.

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In the aftermath of that horrific event, the Canadian Labour Congress issued the powerful call to action, "First mourn, then work for change."

In 1991, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women was established in Canada thanks to a private member's bill by NDP member of Parliament Dawn Black.

For 25 years, December 6 has become a benchmark for all of us because of what has changed and what has not changed in its wake. It is a day for us to join together and mourn the loss of those 14 young women and to remember those who continue to be injured or killed as the result of intimate partner violence and those who continue to experience sexual assault, sexual harassment and stalking.

Equally important, December 6 is a day for us to reflect on what we are doing to change the social, political and economic structures that perpetuate violence against women and children.

Every day in Ontario, women and children flee abusive homes to take refuge in women's shelters, but many remain trapped in violent relationships because of poverty, discrimination, lack of affordable housing, lack of child care and an economy that relies increasingly on precarious work. For those who are employed, too often the violence follows them to their workplaces. For aboriginal women, the reality of violence is much higher, with almost 1,200 aboriginal women murdered or missing in Canada.

For too long, this Liberal government has ignored recommendations on how to prevent intimate partner homicides. It has relied on a piecemeal, project-based approach to domestic violence and sexual assault, instead of advancing a comprehensive and integrated violence prevention strategy that recognizes ending violence against women as an economic and social justice imperative; a shared priority for every ministry, every sector, every community and every citizen in Ontario.

Twenty-five years later, on this December 6, let us commit to real change that will finally put an end to the scourge of violence against women.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am so pleased to rise today to speak to this important item. Tomorrow, December 5, is International Volunteer Day, a day when we pay special tribute to those who selflessly give of their own time to make a difference in our communities and the lives of others locally, nationally and globally.

United Nations Volunteers founded International Volunteer Day in 1985. Since then, governments, the UN system and civil society organizations have successfully joined volunteers around the world to celebrate this day every 5th of December.

I especially look forward to celebrating the major milestone of IVD's 30th anniversary next year.

Volunteering and community engagement empower people to change the world from the grassroots up, and it's so important that we take the time to recognize those efforts and thank those who go above and beyond every day.

I also want to share a few hidden secrets that volunteers around the globe already know. Volunteering is good for you. It connects you to others. It's also good for your mind and body. It can help combat depression and help you stay physically active. It brings fun and fulfilment to your life, and it increases self-confidence. There is the science to prove it, as well, according to a special health report published by Harvard Health Publications. Helping others kindles happiness, as many studies have demonstrated.

When researchers at the London School of Economics examined the relationship between volunteering and measures of happiness in a large group of adults, they found that the more people volunteered, the happier they were, according to a study in Social Science and Medicine.

While many people cite lack of time when it comes to volunteering, I challenge you to try volunteering as a family. While it might be a challenge to coordinate everyone's schedules, volunteering as a family has many worthwhile benefits. Children watch everything you do. By giving back to the community, you show them firsthand how volunteering makes a difference and how good it feels to help other people and, more importantly, enact change.

Tomorrow, I will take a moment to shine the light on the tireless efforts of the volunteers in my community, and I encourage each and every one of us in this chamber to do the same.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

COMMERCIAL FILL

Mr. Granville Anderson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, since commercial fill poses unique challenges for the sustainability and safety of our watersheds, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change should compile the relevant data and consider the development of a strategy for disposing of it in a sustainable and environmentally conscious fashion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Anderson has moved private members' notice of motion number 15. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Today it is my intention to shed light on commercial fill, an issue faced by many rural communities such as the ones I represent in Clarington, Scugog and Uxbridge.

Since coming into office, I have had the opportunity to sit down with constituents from each of these municipalities who have concerns regarding the disposal of commercial fill and its potential effects on the environment. I have made sure to speak with some of my colleagues here at Queen's Park and have come to realize that these concerns are common across the province primarily, as I have said, in rural areas.

For those unfamiliar with commercial fill, it is often referred to as excess soil that has been excavated predominantly from construction sites in urban areas. If there is no room on the current site for storing the soil, or if it has no functional use, the fill is relocated. These relocation sites can be pits, former quarries, farms or other designated areas. This process is accomplished with the use of large trucks; in some cases, hundreds per day, depending on the amount of fill, across rural highways and roads.

Residents of rural communities are also sometimes offered the fill for their own private lands, as a way of adding to landscaping and levelling out of their properties. I begin to see an issue with this process when the fill has not been tested properly for contaminants and dangerous chemicals. Residents are concerned that gasoline, heavy metals, hydrocarbons and other pollutants can come saturated in the fill and end up unnecessarily at distant fill sites, seemingly without forewarning. This poses a risk for those who come in contact with the fill, especially in instances where it has been offered to a private landowner with a home or a farm.

The risk is especially pronounced when we can see the impact that these pollutants could have on our water. Rural Ontarians rely heavily on groundwater for their wells and irrigation. The pollution of such a necessary commodity would have a significant impact on our communities. These transplanted chemicals have the potential to leak into the water table, which affects not only those in the vicinity but those in a much greater area who may share the common watershed.

Without proper testing, it is possible that landowners will find out too late that the fill they have received has been contaminated. A concern arises before the contaminants are dealt with. A labour-intensive process begins to test and remove the fill as necessary, and an appropriate place for disposal must be found. As it stands, residents have to rely on the word of the company moving the soil that it is safe, and municipalities, given fiscal and other resource constraints, are simply not equipped to alleviate these concerns.

While some municipalities have bylaws in place, such as site-alteration bylaws, to regulate what can and can't be added to sites within their borders, most do not have either the resources or staff necessary to monitor the practice. I do not feel they have the jurisdiction to ensure that what is being brought into their area is not tainted.

Unfortunately, several examples of concerns around commercial fill come from my own riding across all three municipalities that I represent. One of them comes from Newcastle in Clarington at a fill site known as Morgans

Road. From 2010 to 2012, hundreds of trucks drove through Newcastle on their way to a dump site off Highway 2.

1400

To the knowledge of the residents, there had been no warning that a fill operation would begin. The residents were subjected to the noise and dust brought by these trucks and the discomfort of not knowing the origin or nature of the fill. They worked with their local municipal councillors, their government representatives and the Ministry of the Environment to learn more about the situation, and testing that was done on the soil.

When a portion of it was found to have exceedingly high levels of contaminants, the re-excavation of some of the fill began, and the residents of the area were again subjected to the process in reverse. This occurred several times, with the new fill added and removed after being tested, and the residents have expressed to me that they still do not feel that they have a full understanding of the status of the fill now in their community.

Another example comes from Greenbank in Scugog. The Greenbank Airport is a small grass airport just northwest of Port Perry. Over the last several years, hundreds of truckloads of fill have been sent through Scugog and neighbouring municipalities to a location that was initially nondescript—to the residents in the area, it appeared simply to be a fill site. Then, however, it was announced by the federal government that the construction of an aerodrome was to eventually begin and that the fill was necessary to prepare the site. However, the fill in question had failed inspection standards on at least two occasions before this announcement, but the residents of Scugog were now told that the matter was under federal jurisdiction. Reports of trucks onto the site still abound while there seems to be no ongoing construction of an aerodrome.

I share the concerns of my constituents that the fill being used in this site needs to be properly tested within the proper jurisdiction but that we need to work together to ensure that jurisdiction is properly established and clearly laid out and that the sustainability and environmental integrity of this area and all areas in Ontario are protected.

I would like to commend the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change for its ongoing work in this area. The Management of Excess Soil guide is a step in the right direction. It has a lot of great pieces and clearly lays out ways in which brown fill and soil must be transported, regulated and evaluated. The minister has made it clear to me that there are intentions in place to deal with these situations and that his staff is working diligently on a plan.

I am bringing this motion before the House because a lot of work is still to be done on ensuring that soil is tested properly, that the specificity of commercial fill is managed within this plan and that we work side by side with our municipal partners, both rural and urban, and our federal partners to ensure that our precious water resources remain protected, and that those who rely on

them—that is, all Ontarians—can rely on that resource to be protected.

It is my intention, by raising this today, to shed some light on the need for our government and the appropriate ministries, as well as municipalities, to ensure that we take a hard look at how we manage the environmental integrity of the landfill that is being brought to these communities.

Our current strategy on sustainability that is coming from the ministry is admirable and covers very important issues. There are implications for certain oversights here that extend beyond commercial fill alone, but if we work together, we can create some efficiencies to ensure that we are all on the same page so that tainted fill is not ending up in our communities.

This is a complex, multi-faceted issue that will take some time to address, but my intent is to keep it at the attention of all parties so that we can start working together to promote the safety of all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm very pleased that the member for Durham has taken on this responsibility. We certainly heard from his predecessor, my good friend John O'Toole, who led the charge for quite some time on this issue. So I want to congratulate the current member for Durham for picking up this rather gritty problem and making sure it stays in the forefront of public attention.

One of the reasons why I feel strongly about it, of course, is that I have constituents who have faced similar issues. It's a very difficult question to find a way to respond, because there are designated landfills, there are processes that are in place, but there are too many opportunities for getting around those rules and regulations. Some of them are the problems of the lack of oversight. Some of them are the fact that people in the neighbourhood look the other way. "It isn't quite in my backyard, so I don't think I want to do anything at this point." So there are all kinds of reasons why this simply gets left to percolate that much more.

The other problem is a practical one. Somebody has a truck full of fill that needs dumping. I recall looking—well, driving, actually—along Bloor Street a couple of seasons ago, and the dump trucks were all the way from the conservatory, almost at Avenue Road, all the way back past St. George. You couldn't help but wonder: Where is all that going? How is it being treated? Who is there to monitor?

We have some legislation, but not enough. We have the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt, which are protected from development, but they've become a bit of a back-door destination for illegal fill. So we need very specific regulations that track, assess and enforce the movement and disposal of commercial fill.

My constituents have eyesores sitting outside their windows. They have pools of water, and material in those pools. The value of their property is declining as we speak.

This is a very important issue that does require all of our attention. Thank you for giving us that opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for bringing the motion back to the House. I remember Mr. O'Toole talking about this issue at length—and I kind of miss him.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: So do we.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know. I kind of miss him. I never thought I'd say that, but he could talk about almost anything, this man. He really could.

The NDP agrees with the member from Durham that there should be a comprehensive regulation on the disposal of commercial fill. We've actually agreed with this for a long time, and so it's good that you've brought it back.

The government has done, quite honestly, an abysmal job at regulating soil disposal, so there's room for improvement. Obviously, because this is a long-standing issue, Ontarians have been at risk of exposure to contaminated soil. This is a problem; there are solutions. We look forward to the passing of this motion and then action on this issue.

1410

For quite some time, the government has lagged on the issue of safe disposal of commercial fill. There is little government oversight with respect to where soil is disposed of. There is inadequate oversight of private contractors and what they do with the excavated soil. There is no clear definition of clean soil. There is no tracking system for the soil. There are few rules about where soil can be dumped. Private developers, you may be interested to know, are allowed to hire so-called "qualified persons" to test the soil they plan to dispose of, but there is no regulation of the plans for disposal, and the government only steps in if something goes wrong.

Obviously this is not a sustainable plan. This is an inadequate plan, because contaminant tests are not always immediately accurate, so we oftentimes end up picking up the pieces after the fact. We do need, in the province of Ontario, a proactive plan to deal with contaminated soil instead of a reactive one. Quite honestly, this is actually an emerging theme here at Queen's Park. It is not appropriate to wait until something goes wrong to deal with potentially harmful soil.

For some time now, municipalities have actually been attempting to pick up the slack in regulation of soil disposal, but they cannot regulate the disposal of commercial fill that crosses municipal borders. That is why a provincial regulation is actually needed. Toxic soil is being spread on otherwise good farmland because there isn't adequate regulation of where it can be disposed of.

According to the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, there are 50 million tonnes of dirt excavated in Ontario construction projects in peak construction years, at a cost of \$1.7 billion. I think we should all acknowledge that this motion from the member for Durham is quite timely, because there is more excavated soil than ever before, due to the Pan Am Games, and more contaminated soil than any other project before.

Once again, the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario says that about 7.5 million tonnes of dirt is contaminated and should be going to approved landfills and sites. Because of a lack of regulation, it is wholly unclear how much of this contaminated soil is actually going to proper landfills. The government obviously does not have a clear picture right now about where the contaminated soil is going, but clearly much of it does not end up in approved sites. Contaminated soil has been dumped on prime farmland in Ontario.

I think it's always helpful to peel back the layers of an issue like this and tell you how it's actually affecting regular people in the province of Ontario. It's true that when contaminated soil is dumped on unapproved sites, this is often discovered accidentally.

This case is from the Toronto Star: Sheep farmers Ruco and Kimberly Braat found "polyaromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals like barium, cadmium, copper and lead" in supposedly clean soil delivered by a company called Green For Life. The Braats say that 700 truckloads were dumped on their land. They've had to sell almost 100 of their 450 sheep to pay for legal costs.

Green For Life—the private garbage collector for the city of Toronto; also of interest—has said they are not to blame, and that it is the fault of their so-called "qualified person." That's another missing part of the oversight, if you will, and the enforcement. The Ministry of the Environment charged GFL and a soil broker called Earthworx, and it is currently in front of the courts—something we hear a lot about here at Queen's Park.

Toxic soil can obviously impact our food and drinking water. Carmela Marshall, of Lakeridge Citizens for Clean Water, said to the Toronto Star, "How many years before it gets in our groundwater? Five years? People are afraid." As development happens, as big, major mega-projects like the Pan Am Games happen, soil obviously needs to be placed elsewhere across the province, and in many jurisdictions the aquifers are becoming more and more stressed. In Waterloo region, our aquifer in certain parts does not have the integrity it once had. This is something we have to be cognizant of.

There is a list of recommendations that I hope can actually help with the issue of disposal, if this motion goes forward—I suspect that it will, because it should—can actually help with the issue of disposal:

- Requirements for testing of excavated fill at specific minimum frequencies: That needs to happen.

- Documentation of where all excavated soils are transported must be included in the record of site condition.

- Qualified persons—actually, really qualified persons—must sign off on the quality and the quantity of the soil excavated and removed from the brownfield site.

- Documentation from the receiving site indicating acceptance of the soils must also be included.

The city of Toronto recommended to the government that they should "enact regulations to ensure that excess soil placement is provincially regulated in a manner that is consistent across the province and in accordance with the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act."

The RCCAO has also recommended a more complete strategy for the disposal of contaminated soil. They recommended “that the province establish a pragmatic, risk-based and affordable framework that distinguishes excess construction soils, particularly those from municipal roads and rights of way, from historic industrial hazardous wastes which are the primary focus of laws such as Ontario regulation 153/04.”

The Ministry of the Environment has a guideline of best practices, as the member from Durham will know, for disposal, but they are generally unenforceable. This is the missing link.

More excavated soil, obviously, is moving around the province. It should be of note for the people of this House that TO2015 has hired Green for Life to dispose of 200,000 tonnes of contaminated soil to an approved landfill, but so far only an eighth has made it. It is unclear where the rest of the soil has ended up, and even Green for Life, the company, is not sure.

There are obviously environmental consequences for not having the appropriate enforcement, for not having the appropriate oversight, to ensure that contaminated soil is placed safely in an approved site. I think that many environmental groups agree that the government is not doing a good enough job with respect to contaminated soil. The NDP agrees. For the protection of Ontarians and Ontario's farmlands, we must do better and we should do better, but the missing piece is the oversight and the enforcement.

I look forward to listening to more of the debate on this important issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm pleased to stand in support of this motion and to join my colleagues from York-Simcoe and Kitchener-Waterloo. I'd like to thank the member from Durham for bringing forth this motion and shedding light on a topic that can affect us all, Mr. Speaker.

This issue is rarely talked about, but it is a conversation that is worth having. Sometimes, as we all know, simply raising awareness about a problem can help, in itself, to find a solution.

The problem of commercial fill being dumped onto rural properties has the potential to cause significant environmental and ecological damage. I think the members opposite have noted that. We must make sure that we do everything possible to minimize its inherent risks. Ensuring that hazardous or toxic soil does not get redistributed to other areas is something that I think we can all agree with. Collecting data and forming a strategy to deal with the issue is an important step and safeguard.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, I understand, perhaps in a particular way, how much it is our responsibility as parliamentarians to protect and maintain the environment for future generations, and it is a responsibility that this government takes very seriously.

Most people probably don't think about or even realize that the soil and other matter that is removed

during construction and development needs to be relocated. It is a practice that is taken for granted. The reality, however, is that this material is often transported long distances and has the potential to contain many harmful or hazardous components in addition to just soil.

Large urban municipalities are most often unable to accommodate the volume of commercial fill produced within their boundaries, so the burden falls upon nearby rural communities. By collecting and analyzing the data on these types of transactions, we can help both sides better understand the risks and the benefits. Clean fill is something that could be used in many applications for the benefit of a community, such as helping in the rehabilitation of exhausted aggregate resource sites, so we should encourage them to use it to their advantage.

Developers may not even be aware of the potential hazards contained within the soil they remove, so we must help them understand and manage these situations when they occur, which they invariably will. Without careful observation and management, this issue has the potential to become very serious, and it is something that many municipalities are facing already, including my community, the city of Burlington.

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Many communities that contain valuable agricultural land are finding themselves faced with difficult choices. Farmers who are having trouble making ends meet are offered money to accept soil dumped on their property, an offer that they sometimes find difficult to refuse. These individuals, these farmers, often do not know where this fill is coming from or what it may contain. They do not have the resources or knowledge to have this material tested, and so something must be done to ensure that they are not putting themselves or others at risk of serious harm.

Agricultural land is extremely valuable, as we all know, both to the economy and to our food security. Once this land is damaged by toxins, it's very difficult—nearly impossible, in fact—to reverse the impacts. Our province is blessed with some of the best agricultural land in the country, but we must not take that for granted. Protecting this resource is of the utmost importance, increasingly so as ensuring our food supply becomes more difficult, and removing risk factors like contaminated soil will play a key role.

This motion will take some important steps towards mitigating these risks and help to safeguard communities and families in areas where this is becoming a problem. Food security is becoming an ever more important issue, so we must make sure that our farmland is protected in every way possible. The agricultural and agri-food sector is a significant contributor to the economy of Ontario, and harming it in any way would be irresponsible.

The dumping of commercial fill can have other impacts on the economy too. Residents exposed to hazardous material could become ill and unable to work, reducing their positive impact on their local economy and potentially putting additional stresses, Speaker, on our health care system. There can also be significant costs

associated with cleanup once contaminated soil is dumped in a location.

These types of operations, in addition to their costs, can take extensive amounts of time to complete, and are often unable to turn the land back to its original state. We simply cannot afford to put Ontario's economy at risk by allowing commercial fill to be dumped anywhere, without first taking into account all of the risk factors and doing what we can to reduce them as much as possible.

Polluted soil can also have effects on wildlife, threatening the habitat and health of species in a given area. Consideration must be given as a priority to protect their well-being when we think about dumping potentially harmful material. Flora and fauna are often very sensitive to the environment around them, and subtle changes can have serious and lasting effects. Introducing foreign toxins into these habitats can decimate populations of birds, mammals, aquatic life and even insects.

Ecosystems maintain a careful balance, and disturbing a single species can have a ripple effect that is felt throughout. This is especially true of species at risk and endangered species, which already face mounting pressures from every corner of society. Adding additional stress could be what pushes them over the brink into extinction, a possibility which is all too real and one which is clearly unacceptable. Creating a plan that will take the safety of local residents into account will have the added effect of protecting the habitat of local wildlife, helping to ensure their survival and removing pressure from those species most at risk.

In addition, watersheds and local groundwater are relied upon heavily by residents of all areas, but those in rural communities are often the most sensitive. Even small amounts of pollutants introduced into a system can have long-lasting, pervasive and devastating effects on residents in the area, including health problems and negative economic impacts.

Beyond the impact to people in these areas, watershed issues can also adversely impact wildlife, including endangered species, as I mentioned, and add further pressure to already weakened and declining populations. Water, like food security, is something that we must do everything within our power to protect.

For the reasons I've cited, and so many more, I would like again to thank the member from Durham for bringing this very important issue to light and helping us to ensure that we protect our environment for generations to come. Our government is committed to protecting the health and well-being of all Ontarians. Initiatives like this will make a positive contribution to that commitment. I would encourage all members of this House to support this motion, given its potential to safeguard our environment, our watersheds, our food security and our economy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise to speak to this particular private member's initiative because I want to underscore the importance of soil management in

all of Ontario. Presently, commercial fill is unregulated, it's rarely checked, and when it is, the consistency and the capacity of the qualified people making the decisions on the soil is often questioned; and at the end of it all, the soil's final destination is often unknown.

With this, the compounding issues in relation to the booming construction in the GTHA has led to increased issues: the increased dumping of commercial fill into rural areas and the increased incidence of contaminated or compromised soil being dumped under the guise of clean fill.

Speaker, action must be taken on this issue, but frankly, this action should have already happened. This is not a new issue, and as you know, it has been raised in the House many times before.

Since 2011, my colleague John O'Toole did a wonderful job standing up and representing his particular riding on this issue. I'd like to also give a nod and my appreciation to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. He has done an outstanding job representing his concerned citizens on this issue as well. You couple their initiatives, dating back to 2011, that this government ignored, turned a blind eye to and voted down—all of their actions were captured by the media, dating back to 2011, 2013, and again this year.

If this government was truly interested in addressing this issue, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing should be working together to table meaningful legislation, as opposed to just the nudge that this particular initiative represents.

Again, I commend the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. He arranged a meeting with the Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller, to allow his concerned citizens to further explore what their options are as they see compromised soil, which very well could be contaminated, coming in truckloads, literally, to their community around the Erin area.

What we find on the order paper today—really and truly, when you peel away the layers—is just a recommendation. It's a recommendation that the government should compile relevant data. Well, Speaker, I suggest to you, based on the real-life examples we've seen and read about in the news recently, we need to be developing a strategy, as opposed to just compiling relevant data. And we have to go on from that, because we know this is a sizable issue.

We've heard earlier that the RCCAO finds that, on average, 25 million cubic metres of excess soil is excavated annually from sites across Ontario. In peak construction years, up to 50 million tonnes of dirt was excavated in Ontario projects, most from the GTA region, with experts estimating 15% of that soil—as much as 7.5 million tonnes—was contaminated and en route to approved landfill or remediation sites.

I want to talk about those remediation sites as well. It underscores the importance of having an action plan.

My community of South Bruce undertook, in the last three years, a huge infrastructure project with water and

sewers, and the soil that came into the community this past spring was compromised. People were looking forward to walking on their green grass again, and lo and behold, they were finding sharp objects in it. Up on the hill, they were literally collecting Baggies full of foreign objects out of the soil. This should not be happening in Ontario.

We also note that the construction of the athletes' village for the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games saw 500,000 tonnes of soil removed. And guess what, Speaker? The government, this Liberal government of the day, can only account for 134,000 tonnes. That's unacceptable.

Speaker, we talk about this initiative—nudging the government to compile relevant data. Well, I think it's clear the issue already is in existence. So I encourage this government to step up and develop an action plan and meaningful legislation. I want to implore this government that we want an effective solution to this problem and provincial action across Ontario.

If the government was really concerned about this issue, this motion would not be needed and you would instead be seeing a Liberal government spending its time putting forward legislation to fix this problem, not wasting our time and taxpayers' time with a nudge.

This motion does not force the minister to take any action on the issue of contaminated soil or excess soil management.

So while, yes, I do support this motion, I believe more than just a nudge is necessary. I sincerely hope this government will take this issue seriously.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's a pleasure to rise in this House—I apologize for my rusty throat—and speak on this issue that the member from Durham brought forward regarding disposal of contaminated soil.

Everyone I've heard so far has agreed with this motion. What makes this motion unique is it was initially proposed by a previous member for Durham, who was a Conservative. Conservatives are traditionally seen as anti-regulation, but this is a case where the Conservative Party agrees that this issue, the issue of contaminated soil, needs more regulation.

The member from Durham—the current member from Durham—has proposed this, and I've heard all the Liberal members speak on this and say that this should be done. It leaves me somewhat perplexed, Speaker. It truly does. Because I've listened to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and he's obviously—obviously—passionate about the environment. We've watched this government in action in this last session, and they are certainly not afraid of pushing legislation through this House—some that's fairly egregious, in our opinion. But this stronger environmental control on contaminated soil is a no-brainer. This is something that we don't need a motion for. The government could do this, and the Conservatives would agree with it, because they proposed it. What's the problem?

We all agree that this is a huge issue. It's an old issue. I can remember when I was on the board of Dairy Farmers of Ontario, and a farmer came and he had contaminated soil on his land. He drilled a well into it. He didn't know it was from the Ministry of Transportation. It was asphalt, and his cows died. This isn't a new issue; it's an old issue.

I don't understand why the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change doesn't move on this today—today. It isn't an issue for today. It was an issue a year ago, two years ago, 10 years ago. Now with the Pan Am/Parapan Games—the first time I've said that in the Legislature—it's a huge issue. If this government was really concerned—if the former Minister of the Environment was really concerned, he would have moved on this, instead of talking about these motions.

This is one where no one is going to disagree. The Conservatives are going to agree to more regulation. Look at that. And the Liberals should agree. But the Liberals have a majority. They've pushed everything else through this House, yet they're unwilling to push actual relevant environmental legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of the spirit of the motion put before us by the member for Durham. I haven't heard, and I would never have expected to have heard, any contrary discussion to this motion in the House today, because it really is a fundamental issue that needs to be looked at, to be dealt with. As I said, I'm pleased to support the spirit of the motion.

I've heard from my residents. On a number of occasions, I think, when I've been speaking in the House, I've talked about how important the Oak Ridges moraine is to the residents of Newmarket-Aurora. I'll continue to speak to that, because when I knocked on doors, many, many people told me how important it is to protect the moraine, which really is the rain barrel of southern Ontario.

You can imagine the horror that struck Aurora a few years ago—two years ago, I believe; it will be three years this spring—when an owner of a piece of vacant property proceeded to punch a laneway from Yonge Street onto the property and cut down hundreds of trees and trucked in hundreds of truckloads of soil, right on top of the Oak Ridges moraine, without permission from the region, from the municipality of Aurora or from anyone else. Our concern, as residents of the area, was about what was in the soil that was coming from wherever it came from.

It's an interesting observation, because a number of people from towns to the north of us—East Gwillimbury and Georgina—have talked about the impact of fill on farmland in that area and their concerns about what is contained in that soil. I know a number of them contacted us to talk about the need for regulation and the need to make sure that the soil heading north is clean. They told me that when Toronto announces a subway project, a chill runs up and down their spine because they know

that that's going to mean an awful lot of fill moving north. They just want to be sure that it is clean fill that's being used.

As a speaker said earlier, a lot of the time, that fill is put to good purpose. A lot of low-lying areas—under the supervision of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority—that fill is placed appropriately. It's clean and it's used to enhance the viability of marginal agricultural land and to turn it into more productive land. So there is a place for clean fill to be used appropriately.

But going back to our property in Aurora and the boldness, I think this is what is so frustrating for residents. It's not just necessarily the proper regulation or enforcement. We had a lot of that in place in our town and in our region, and yet when officials confronted the owner of the property and ordered them to stop dumping truckloads in—they were doing it at nighttime and they were doing it on the weekend. Finally, only because a number of citizens and a certain councillor with the town of Aurora threatened to chain themselves across the laneway, the region moved in and put a tandem wheel dump truck across the illegal laneway to stop the owner of that property from dumping more soil, only to find out the next day that they had pushed it out of the way with their bulldozer and had brought in yet more soil. So the town got to play. It brought its dump trucks in and parked them. We had a security camera set up and security guards on-site.

That's what made everyone so angry: that even when you have rules, even when you have enforcement, if you have an industry that can act that way without getting into too much trouble—or so they thought—they will get away with it. I can say that in our neck of the woods, I believe things have ended happily. The province, the region and the town have had the soil removed, hundreds of truckloads. The land has been reshaped, topsoil put down and trees replanted. It was a lengthy process, quite frankly, and it was a real scare because we were never sure what was in all of that soil that was being dumped. We had no assistance whatsoever from the owner of the property.

But I know things haven't gone well to the north of us, in municipalities to the north of my riding. I think it behooves us all to take a closer look at how we regulate and how we enforce the transportation of those soils, be they clean or not so clean.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's interesting to hear the consensus that seems to be emerging around this issue on this debate.

I want to commend the member for Durham for bringing this private member's resolution forward today. He is following very effectively in the footsteps of his predecessor, John O'Toole, the former member for Durham, who, as I'm sure you know, was very vocal on this issue over a number of years while he was still serving in the Legislature, before his retirement.

This is an issue that has affected my constituents as well. I think it was around two years ago that I met with a

number of concerned residents in the town of Erin who brought their concerns to my attention about the fill that was coming into their area. I listened, and I investigated some of the facts. What they were telling me was correct. I wrote a letter to the Minister of the Environment of the day and urged the appointment of an inter-ministerial committee involving senior civil servants from the various ministries that have an interest in this issue, and I've followed up on a couple of occasions. I think that would be another reasonable approach to trying to come up with a comprehensive provincial strategy to deal with this issue.

But it was just over a year ago that, working with the Environmental Commissioner, we came up with the idea of using the Environmental Bill of Rights mechanism to request a comprehensive review of the issue of the disposal of fill. I'm pleased to say that the Minister of the Environment of the day, the member for St. Catharines, agreed and launched a full review of the issue. We're now, I think, about 12 months into that review. We were told the review would take between 12 and 18 months. So again, I want to thank him.

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We also asked for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to review the issue. Again, we believe that they have a significant part to play in terms of developing the strategy. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs chose not to launch the review, but we continue to call upon that ministry to assume some responsibility for this issue in terms of working towards a solution.

I also want to compliment and thank our environment critic, the member for Huron-Bruce, who has taken a real keen interest in all of the issues affecting her riding, as well as those involving her critic responsibility in the time that she's served in the Legislature. She's doing an outstanding job, and I want to thank her.

Also the member for York-Simcoe, I know, had brought forward an initiative like this a couple of years ago and has shown real leadership towards trying to find a way to come to a solution that ensures that this compromised soil, as we call it, is disposed of safely and not just dumped in rural Ontario in such a way that will compromise the environment for, perhaps, generations to come.

I think this is a very important issue. I do want to, again, commend the member for Durham. I think it's likely that this motion is going to pass, and so we would call upon the various ministers of the government to take it seriously and not just sort of assume that it's a done deal: "It was passed by the Legislature, and now we can forget about it." Hopefully there will be follow-up from the government, and I would encourage the member for Durham to continue to work with his colleagues to push the relevant ministers from within the government caucus to do the right thing and get moving on this issue to ensure that compromised soil is, in fact, disposed of safely.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now turn to the member for Durham for his response.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I'd like to thank the members from the opposition: the member from Huron–Bruce, the member from York–Simcoe and the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for supporting this motion and for their very kind words. I would also like to thank the members from the third party: the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for their support as well. From my colleagues on this side of the aisle, I would like to thank the MPP from Burlington and the MPP from Newmarket–Aurora. I very much appreciate all of my colleagues who have spoken on this motion today for their insights and opinions, and for helping me to bring attention to this issue.

We are being diligent in ensuring that our way of living is sustainable, and that our environment is protected and secure for current and future Ontarians. Our government and the Ministry of the Environment are making every effort to move forward in a conscious and prudent way. We must pay special attention to issues, such as commercial fill, as we develop and grow the province, so that the process is equitable for all Ontarians. The movement of commercial fill is part of this process and we must ensure that our precious resources remain protected, and that our rural residents are comfortable with the soil in their communities.

Ensuring that we have the requisite information and data to have a full understanding of the impact of commercial fill is what I'm bringing attention to today. Having a plan and strategy for dealing with this—one that co-operates with all parties from residents to municipalities to government officials—is my goal.

Thank you again to all of my colleagues for aiding me in this effort. Please support this motion. I look forward to working with my constituents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on the motion at the end of private members' public business.

RESPECTING PRIVATE PROPERTY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE RESPECT DE LA PROPRIÉTÉ PRIVÉE

Ms. Jones moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act / Projet de loi 36, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'entrée sans autorisation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my honour to rise today to debate my private member's bill, Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. I believe my bill will provide benefits to all Ontarians. It will institute a system of fairness and equity that currently does not exist when it comes to the problem of trespassing on private property.

I'd first like to provide some context as to why I brought forward this bill. I've heard from constituents

who have complained about uninvited trespassers on private property, especially on farmland. For example, I'd like to read an excerpt from correspondence I received on this issue: "Too often, farmers and farm properties are host to uninvited trespassers who hunt or ride on farm fields on ATVs, damaging crops and property, disturbing animals and even posing a threat to the farm's biosecurity."

I believe that this is a fair concern to be raised in this chamber. Many of us here know farmers or have family members who own a farm. When you speak to them, they will understand the threats posed by trespassers, but even if you're not a farmer there are still legitimate concerns regarding trespassing on private property. I don't think anyone here would want their property that they have worked hard for and take care of to be intruded upon and potentially damaged in the process.

Unfortunately, the Trespass to Property Act as it's currently written does not address this issue adequately. This is the reason I've introduced Bill 36: to update the Trespass to Property Act to enable it to better deal with issues like this.

To start, obviously the Trespass to Property Act prohibits the unlawful entry of a premise without the permission of the occupier. It is considered trespassing when someone enters on a premise that is prohibited under this act or engages in an activity on a premise when the activity is prohibited under the act. It is also considered trespassing if a person does not leave the premises immediately after he or she is directed to do so by the occupier of the premises or a person authorized by the occupier.

When someone is caught and is deemed to have trespassed, the act sets out that they are liable to a fine of not more than \$2,000. The problem, Speaker, is that there is no minimum fine set in the act, so often what ends up happening is that no fine, in fact, is levied at all. This ends up reinforcing the dangerous notion that anyone can trespass without repercussion.

In addition to this issue, the Trespass to Property Act also states that if someone is convicted of trespassing and the property was damaged, the owner is entitled to sue for compensation. The problem is that in these cases the property owner may only receive a maximum compensation of \$1,000. So let's think about that for a moment: If someone trespasses, causes \$10,000 worth of damage and is convicted of trespassing, the owner of the property can recoup, at a maximum, \$1,000—and that's the best-case scenario. In effect, the owner would be out of pocket for any additional damages. I don't think that's fair, and that's why I've introduced Bill 36.

I'd like to draw everyone's attention to an interesting statistic: In 2009, there were 33,423 charges received under the Trespass to Property Act. Every year since, that statistic has grown. This is an issue that is clearly happening across Ontario. I think it is safe to assume that the reason why trespassing still occurs in our province, and has increased, is because the current act is insufficient in curbing trespassing.

In its current form, the Trespass to Property Act does not go far enough in providing fair compensation for property owners, and does not send a strong message to individuals who choose to trespass. We must find a way to discourage trespassing on private property and create a system of fair compensation for individuals who experience damage on their property as a result of trespassing.

People who trespass on farmland, for example, can end up damaging fencing, crops, livestock and other parts of the property. This can quickly add up to thousands of dollars in damages. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has stated that more needs to be done in regard to trespassing on private property.

I want to read another excerpt from the correspondence I've received from a Dufferin-Caledon constituent. It reads, "The Trespass to Property Act should be amended to protect landowners, deter unwanted visitors and compensate farmers fairly for damage." My bill, the Respecting Private Property Act, will do just that.

The Respecting Private Property Act will make necessary changes to the Trespass to Property Act. It will create a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing, and it will increase the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000. Increasing the limit on compensation for damages allows property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction of their property; and a minimum fine will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue and will not be taken lightly.

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In light of my private member's bill, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has come out in support. I would like to read the endorsement from their vice-president, Keith Currie, into the record. I'm sure many of the members in this chamber know that the OFA has been calling for these changes for quite some time. So the initial idea came from them, and I do appreciate their support.

"The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is proud to support Sylvia Jones MPP's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. The OFA has been working with government and policy-makers to amend the Trespass to Property Act for many years. We need this act updated to reflect the severity of trespassing and the damages that result from thoughtless or reckless behaviour."

I was proud to receive this endorsement for Bill 36, because the OFA has been dealing with this issue for years with their members. They know the problem, they are familiar with the causes, and their endorsement is something that I think speaks to the effectiveness of Bill 36 in curbing the issues I've spoken about today.

Dufferin-Caledon is consistently growing, and as of 2011, there are more than 40,000 private dwellings, with some areas experiencing large spikes in residential development.

Trespassing on private property should be a concern to all of us and to anyone who owns a piece of property that they have worked hard for.

I want to read out another piece of correspondence I received after I introduced Bill 36: "Trespassers are a big

problem on my property and the police are called several times a year. No trespassing signs, or the fence stops people from entering. I have been laughed at and told trespassing is no more than a parking ticket.... Something must be done for people to take trespassing seriously. I am in 100% support of increasing the minimal fine to \$500."

Speaker, people are powerless to stop individuals from trespassing. In addition, there is clearly little or no action being taken to prevent trespassing and hold accountable those who do it. We need to discourage trespassing. I believe this can be effectively done through the establishment of a minimum fine.

I've also received an endorsement from the Peel Federation of Agriculture: "The private member's bill regarding the increase in trespassing fine is fully supported by the directors and members of the Peel Federation of Agriculture. Since the creation of the greenbelt over 10 years ago, some of the members of the public have the misconception that greenbelt has become public property. Our members are seeing an increase in trespassing, both on foot and on motorized off-road vehicles. Crops are damaged, animals have escaped from gates left open. All the garbage left behind is left for us to clean up. There is also an increased risk in liability to our members, if injury occurs on their property. We fully support this bill, it will encourage deterrence from exposure to such cases, and we thank you for all your efforts."

Speaker, I believe these letters of support speak to the problems I have raised and attempted to address with Bill 36. We cannot expect property owners to foot the bill when a trespasser causes damage. It's not fair, and it's not right. We need to ensure there is equity in the system.

Many of those who experience damage to their property are, in fact, farmers. When their property is damaged, it takes a toll on their livelihood. This is not right, and \$1,000 in compensation doesn't come nearly close enough when the cost of damages can potentially far exceed this. Particularly when you consider the risk of vandalism in a more urban setting, the risk of damage occurring as a result of trespass does exist, and the owner shouldn't be responsible for footing the bill; the trespasser should be.

We need to ask ourselves if the current fine structure is fair and equitable. That's why I've brought forward Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. It addresses the concerns with the current law and will establish what I believe to be a fair and equitable system.

I sincerely hope all of my colleagues here today will vote to support Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. We need to ensure that property owners are fairly compensated for destruction of their property. We need to send a signal that trespassing is a serious issue and will not be taken lightly.

I wanted to share with you a very brief story. Many of you will be familiar with the Cheltenham Badlands. It's a much-loved, highly sought after, day trip tourism destination that I'm sure a lot of people in this chamber have either seen pictures of or visited themselves.

There is a friend of mine who lives very close to the Badlands. She told me a story last week that, over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, a large family was having a picnic on her front lawn. They believed that because they'd visited the Cheltenham Badlands and they were having a great afternoon in the country, they would take their picnic lunch and their portable barbecue, which they literally set up on the front lawn of this woman's property.

As you can imagine, she was not pleased and was extremely frustrated when she tried to explain to the trespassers that this was not public property and they were not welcome to have a family dinner on her front lawn. The response seemed to be, "We're in the country. We're enjoying the lovely weather, and we're enjoying the fall colours. Why can't you leave us alone?"

Clearly, there needs to be a lot more education, but we also need to put in the deterrents that will prevent this kind of abuse, because there is no other word for it. Private property is, by its very nature, private property. We have to have laws and legislation in place that will deter that kind of activity, and I believe Bill 36 will do that.

I'm going to listen with interest to the debates, and I hope I can count on support from all three sides.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Today, I'm pleased to speak on my colleague's Bill 36, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm having trouble hearing here, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have some order in the House, please? Those having conversations, please go outside.

Mr. Paul Miller: The damage caused by trespassers and the time and expense required to seek compensation are major concerns for rural Ontarians. Trespassing on private farmland can result in damage to crops, livestock, fencing and other parts of the property. Too often, farmers and landowners have no effective redress for this damage. This bill seeks to change that.

I know that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been strongly supportive of this bill, and I fully understand why. At present, the courts may impose a fine of up to \$2,000 for trespassing. The bill before us proposes to impose a minimum fine of \$500 where there is currently none and, therefore, instruct the courts to impose a fine of between \$500 and \$2,000 for the offence of trespassing on private property.

I'm supportive of the rights of landowners against trespassers, and I'm also supportive of some level of minimum fine. The objective of this bill to increase the limit for court-ordered compensation is a very worthy one and, in my opinion, the most important aspect of the bill before us today.

Currently in Ontario, if a trespasser damages property, the courts can award only up to \$2,000 in compensation

for damages caused by the trespasser. To recover damages over \$1,000, you have to file a separate and additional lawsuit in court. One thousand dollars is far too low and means that farmers and rural Ontarians are placed at a real disadvantage by the people who trespass and cause damage to their properties. It's too much of a burden to ask landowners to hire a lawyer and file a lawsuit if they want to recover \$1,200 or even \$3,000 for damages caused by this trespasser.

I'm a steelworker from Hamilton, not a rural landowner, but it would infuriate me to see trespassers driving snowmobiles across my land without permission, knowing that they can effectively get away with tearing up my property.

If someone causes damage to my property that I have to pay for, I shouldn't have to file a lawsuit to get compensation. I shouldn't have to pay for someone else's antics and negligence, and I shouldn't have to hire a lawyer and go through the whole process. It's expensive. These trespassers know it, and it enables them. We have enough problems with access to justice in this province without that.

I strongly support increasing the amount of damages that a court can order without the landowner having to file a civil lawsuit. Twenty-five thousand dollars seems to me to be a reasonable cut-off point.

On the other aspect of the bill, I'm also supportive of imposing a minimum fine. But I would like to make some constructive comments on this bill, and I hope that my colleague can enlighten the House on this point and potentially address this in committee.

I would like to know the logic behind setting \$500 as the minimum fine. It is the job of judges to consider the gravity of the offence when determining the appropriate sentence.

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A blanket minimum fine of \$500 may not be fair and proportionate in every circumstance. I wonder what my colleague would think of building a little flexibility into this bill. We might consider, for instance, allowing the landowner to ask the court not to impose the \$500 fine, but only charge to the trespasser the landowner's legal costs and expenses of coming to court, as well as the damages. That would be a more than sufficient deterrent. We were all young and foolish once, and landowners will recognize that.

I understand that a minimum fine will act to some degree as a deterrent to trespassers, and that it's something that is certainly in the interests of rural Ontarians. However, if my colleague is seeking to prevent judges from imposing trivial or nominal fines, why was the level of \$500 chosen instead of, say, \$100 or \$200?

The province of Prince Edward Island currently imposes a minimum fine of \$200 for this offence, which I believe is the highest in Canada by some distance. Newfoundland and Labrador have a minimum fine of \$10, which doesn't strike me as very much of a deterrent.

The reason I am questioning this point of the bill is that it would make Ontario something of a leader, but

also an exception and a standout in Canadian law. Like Ontario, most Canadian provinces do not currently impose a minimum fine for trespassing. For example, British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia and Manitoba do not have mandatory minimum fines for trespassing.

The value of a minimum fine is a very significant decision, and if we're proposing to go far above the norm in other Canadian jurisdictions, it seems to me that this aspect of the bill should be examined and justified in committee. I would hope that my colleague is open to that possibility.

I'm supportive of landowners against trespassers, and I'm supportive of some level of minimum fine. But I would like to make sure that whatever minimum fine we do impose in the province is chosen after professional input and justified by evidence. So, I would like to see the evidence and logic more clearly before we settle on this particular value.

This worthy bill addresses two of the concerns that many Ontarians have had about trespassers: first, the weak deterrent effect of our current laws, and second, the great difficulty that our current laws create for farmers and landowners just trying to get rightful compensation for damages caused by trespassers.

I have rural landowners in my riding, and I'm going to talk to some of them to see what their thoughts are on this bill. I'm interested in their comments and suggestions, and I will most certainly bring them to the attention of the committee that considers this bill.

For a little bit of a sideline here, I'd like to remind the House that there are other concerns not addressed here, and which may be considered by members of the government at some future date.

We may wish to debate and examine the Occupiers' Liability Act, to be reassured that this is properly achieving its objectives. I know that many homeowners, farmers and landowners are concerned about the legal consequences if a trespasser is injured on their property. Ontarians should be reassured that there are exemptions to the basic duty of care they owe to the users of their property. Specifically, rural trespassers are responsible for their own safety. Non-paying entrants to a rural property are responsible for their own safety when using rural property for permitted recreational purposes, and of course, people who enter for criminal purposes are considered to have assumed all risks, although that does not mean we can set traps and create hazards that deliberately risk, injure or kill.

In conclusion, Speaker, I commend my colleague for this bill. I'm happy to recommend it, and I will lend my support to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm happy to stand up today to speak to the Trespass to Property Act, designed to give property owners clearer control over the entry to and use of their property. Trespassing involves unauthorized entry to property or engaging in an activity that is banned or refusing to leave the property immediately after being

told by an owner or someone who controls the property. For example, a tenant can be banned entry to a property by issuing a notice orally or in writing. Signs can also be posted on a property to indicate that entry is not permitted or is banned.

It is an offence to trespass, and I can understand why my colleague from Caledon would present this bill, coming from a rural area like Caledon, which actually neighbours Brampton-Springdale. It is an offence, and if a person is charged and found guilty, the person can be fined up to \$2,000, and in addition, a court can order a person found guilty of trespassing to pay for damages to the property.

What the member from Caledon has introduced is an amendment to strike out "a fine of not more than \$2,000" in the portion after clause (b) and substituting "a fine of not less than \$500 and not more than \$2,000". However, many trespass charges are laid for minor infractions such as hanging out in a mall or blocking pedestrian traffic. The government does not believe that a minimum of \$500, as proposed by the bill, is appropriate in such cases. We prefer to let the judge levy the right fine for the circumstances before the court.

Much of the problem with the law of trespass in rural areas is enforcement. It is not possible to have police officers patrolling every field, woodlot and trail in the province. For that reason, the act already authorizes property owners to arrest trespassers and to hold them until the police can arrive to lay charges. Bill 36 does not touch this provision, which may be useful in these particular cases.

The government is considering the desirability of making changes to the Trespass to Property Act in response to consultations on strengthening the Ontario Trails Strategy held by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport with stakeholders including the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Trespassing is going to be difficult for everybody. We understand the damages that it could cause to rural property. It makes it difficult for the owners. They do have the provisions in the act to be able to arrest those people and to hold those people. If we were a lot more strict in enforcing the laws and the rules of trespassing that are currently in place, that could help some of the issues that the rural community is facing in Caledon and across the province. So we're hoping that we can work on that.

We're hoping that we can look at the act, definitely, to amend it, because the maximum fine for the offence that we were looking at needs to be reconsidered, considering it was set at its current level in 1989. We're definitely open to revisiting the idea; it's just that we may have some differences on how we want to revisit the idea. There is a great problem with trespassing, especially in the rural area, but we need to balance it out with the fact that people who have minor trespassing charges and are found guilty shouldn't be fined at the same level.

We understand that when there is damage caused, the person is, right now, held liable for the damage that they

are causing to the property. That should continue. I believe that continuing to actually charge those people and have those charges taken care of, have the costs taken care of, is only in fairness to the rural community, to our farmers and our agricultural community, but we also need to consider where there is no damage.

The fines and the prices—although we need to revisit them, we need to look at how we're going to revisit them and what the cost of revisiting them will be, what the fine should be set at, and take a look at the legislation. It is a great idea to revisit it, considering the date and the last time that we did look at it; it has been a long time. There have been many changes. It is a danger for all of our rural community, the damage that it may be causing for them. However, a lot of the trespassing charges are minor infractions, so we do have to take that under consideration. We'll continue to look at that.

"The act is amended by striking out 'for an amount in excess of \$1,000' at the end and substituting 'for an amount in excess of \$25,000,'" right now. That is extreme. With the previous act—it is extreme. We need to find a way that it is less extreme, but we can still resolve the issue of trespassing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: As opposition critic for agriculture, food and rural affairs, we wish to reiterate our support for this legislation and for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's request to amend the Trespass to Property Act.

As we've just heard, currently there is no minimum fine for trespassing on farmland. There is a maximum of \$2,000. The Trespass to Property Act currently has a limit of \$1,000 in compensation. Our member for Dufferin-Caledon is proposing that we establish a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increase the level of compensation to \$25,000.

As farm owners, we all have stories. Every spring we see, oftentimes, people picking trilliums in my father's woods across from my place—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: That's supposed to be illegal.

Mr. Toby Barrett: It is illegal—running ATVs up Crabapple Creek that runs for about a mile up through my farm, hunting without permission in our gullies, other stories of drunken driving in cornfields and soybean fields, burning barns, stealing fuel, stealing tractor batteries. Torching stolen cars is a big issue down my way; stolen cars and pickup trucks and SUVs.

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I was elected in 1995, and somehow at that time I came up number one for private members' business. In my first week in this Legislature—it was September of that year—I introduced Bill 11 to restore property rights to the province of Ontario. It passed first reading, it passed second reading and it went to public hearings before the Standing Committee on Justice. Again, the purpose of the bill was to restore property rights to the province of Ontario—not just on farms but all property.

Given that property rights are part of our heritage—people have come to this country, to this province to own property, something they may not have been allowed to do in their home country. Private ownership, the development of property, is a key incentive for economic growth and prosperity.

There is a strong historical tradition in the western world of protecting property. Property rights go back to the year 1215, the Magna Carta: the foundation of our common law in Ontario and Canada. The recognition, through the Magna Carta, is very straightforward.

Some 50 years ago, the 750th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta was marked at a ceremony in Langton in my riding. This coming June 15, next year, will be the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, and I will be commemorating that ceremony in the village of Langton.

In 1689, these rights of property were affirmed again in the British Bill of Rights. In 1948, Canada signed the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms that no one be arbitrarily deprived of property.

In 1960, the Canadian Bill of Rights also affirmed the right to the enjoyment of property. My grandfather always had that up on the wall at the entrance to his home. I've had a number of people ask me, "Don't we have property rights now?" The answer, very simply, is no. We're not prohibited from buying or selling or possessing private property, but we have no written protection against that right being infringed upon at some point. And as we would all know, in 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms omitted any mention of property rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour, as the NDP ag critic, to be able to stand and support—I hope my voice gets better sometime this afternoon. Pardon me.

It's an honour to be able to stand in this House as the NDP ag critic and support Bill 36, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act. I know that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been pushing for something like this for a long time. On their behalf, as the other rural members have said, I think it's a good piece of legislation.

It might sound a bit odd for someone from northern Ontario, because in northern Ontario we have a lot of crown land, which is basically the land of the public. In certain areas where I live, it's all private; it looks a lot like rural southern Ontario. We have our problems, because people have a hard time differentiating between crown land and private land.

I would like to dispel the image that people in the agriculture business don't want to—that we are against anyone else enjoying the countryside, because that's not true. I'll give you an example. Across my property, we have the "A" snowmobile trail of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. They are very good to work with and have always been good to work with, but there came a point when we, and they, had a lot of trouble with

people abusing their rights on the trails and, as such, were crossing our land in places where they weren't actually allowed. With our climatic conditions, if you cross an alfalfa field and pack the snow down, you'll kill the alfalfa.

It came to a head, and we sat down with the Federation of Snowmobile Clubs and said, "Look, unless this is fixed, we're closing the trail." We worked together with the snowmobile clubs, and they worked together with their members to contain the people who were abusing the system.

This type of legislation would hopefully do the same thing, because the vast majority of people understand and respect each other's property and each other's property rights. But it's the minority who tend to ruin it for the majority. The minority, when they know that there are no real repercussions to their actions, tend to abuse other people's rights even more. Legislation like this, where there actually are repercussions if you wilfully damage or wilfully use another's property without permission, would be a step forward.

Now, if and when—and hopefully—this bill gets to committee, we can always look at amending something to make something a little bit better, or change it for someone's whim or fancy, but the idea that there should be stronger repercussions when someone wilfully uses or damages another piece of property—we've had it on our farm. We always check on the Ski-Doo trail. The Ski-Doo club does a fantastic job of making sure there is nothing left on the Ski-Doo trail, but we have had occasions when the snowmobiles left the trail, and sometimes they'll leave a lunch bucket or something; and when that goes through your Discbine, it's not pretty. It causes damage.

It's at times like that when you feel like calling up the Federation of Snowmobile Clubs and saying, "Look, that's it," but because they're so good to deal with, we know that they're trying their best.

When you can work with a group like that, it's really good, but when the legislation from the province doesn't really support what both of us are trying to do, it causes a roadblock and, in the long term, it causes problems.

I would really like, in closing, to express our support for this type of legislation. We hope that it goes to committee and we hope that it eventually comes along.

The only thing I have to say about this in closing, for the member from—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin-Caledon.

Mr. John Vanthof: —Dufferin-Caledon, my final compliment: I wish it was mine. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It is a tremendous pleasure of mine to speak to Bill 36, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act. I'm particularly pleased to be able to go after the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

During our debates earlier yesterday, the wonderful riding of Beaches-East York got characterized somewhat as an agricultural riding and a rural riding. One would

think that maybe the provisions we're discussing here today would have immediate application to that great agricultural riding, but I want to assure the House that it hasn't been a rural, agricultural riding since about 1902, which was when the last Liberal was elected in Beaches-East York, almost 112 years ago—1902.

In those days, there was corn and alfalfa—cash crops—in Beaches-East York, but now it's a very different situation, so you will appreciate that the kinds of concerns that the member from Dufferin-Caledon is raising are not concerns directly associated with the residents, the constituents I deal with on a day-to-day basis. However, there are other issues attached to the Trespass to Property Act which do apply, principally around private properties—malls, stores, and even parks, schoolyards and such—where misdemeanours and things are happening, which also have to be taken into consideration as we move forward in discussion with this bill.

I'm also delighted that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk started with a bit of a historical lesson on the rights of property, going back to the Magna Carta. I also want to talk a bit about a great philosophic mentor in my own personal life, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Those of you who have studied some philosophy will remember that Jean-Jacques Rousseau spoke at length about how all men are born free, but everywhere are in chains. That was his famous slogan.

1520

That concept of being born free, but shackled, spoke directly to property tax rights. In his First Discourse, he talked about how when society went and put fences around common property, that was the source of all social evils, because once you claim this as your own then you want to protect it as your own, and that's when people took up arms against each other: to protect those rights of property.

Now, we've moved way past the gentle philosophic musings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. We do respect property rights because things are happening on people's private property for which there is value. We on the government side, I can assure you, take very seriously that when there is damage to private property as a result of trespass, it's a serious offence and it needs to be taken care of.

It was 1989 since the fines in this particular act were adjusted, and I can assure all members of the House that our government has taken a very close look at issues around the fines structure. There probably is movement; it should be adjusted in order to reflect the realities of modern society.

Now, as those of you who may have read some of my personal biography work, I'm a great flyfisher—

Ms. Catherine Fife: I didn't get that. I didn't get that.

Mr. Arthur Potts: You didn't get the piece? I'm a flyfisher. Nothing gives me more pleasure, as a member of a downtown urban riding, than getting out into the beautiful countryside and into the member from Dufferin-Caledon's own area, the Forks of the Credit. What a beautiful, beautiful part of Ontario. It does give

me great pleasure as a flyfisher to go up to the Forks. One the great challenges I often find is getting access to the river, because of private property rights. I'll drive around and find a bridge crossing the Credit. I'll want to park the car and, "No fishing here" and "No trespassing here." I mean, access to the river is a real, real big issue. Being on the river, that's public property, and there's no issue if I'm on the river, but I can't get to the river unless I sort of jump over the bridge or maybe hang a rope ladder of some sort to get down and spend some time fishing in the river.

I can assure you that as a flyfisher I have a very gentle approach to the trespasses I might occasionally have indulged in in the past where I'm just trying to get to the river. I'm not damaging anything. There will be those times I'll be walking down the river after an hour or an hour and a half and catching some of those beautiful brook trout and speckled trout and browns, and I'll have to come out. I'll be in the middle of private property, trying to get back to my car, where walking along the river isn't really accessible.

So it's absolutely important that we take a more holistic view sometimes to how people manage, that we chill out a little bit about, "This is mine. Thou shall not go." But the issue of the damage associated when people do go should be taken very, very seriously; and I know our government will do so.

Now, the bill does not speak to enforcement issues. I mean, clearly, that is a serious, serious issue. We take it very seriously. We have been doing work with the Ontario Trails Strategy. We are reviewing issues around access because we know people are violating, and it is a serious concern, as the member notes. It's a question of how to address those.

It is very disconcerting to all of us, as we know the frustrations experienced by rural property owners. After a time it is just so frustrating that we talked about traps or snares and stringing cable across trails to stop people going where they're not supposed to go. We all know that's totally unacceptable, but it deals with that incredible frustration that I'm sure so many people in rural Ontario feel that people aren't respecting—and it's not about just being on my land; it's about being on my land and doing damage.

I'm very encouraged by this bill. I'm pretty confident we will send it to committee and take a hard look at it. I've got to tell you, though, that a minimum fine of \$500 for what could be just a simple nuisance is probably excessive. I take from the member from Hamilton East and his comments that you still have to give judicial discretion around what you're going to charge someone for doing a simple trespass; and \$500 may be too much. But raising the upper end, particularly on the compensation part of the file, I think is a very important consideration. Because it's important that if there has been serious damage, a judge should be able, without having to go to the necessary expense of a long civil suit, hiring lawyers—we all know exactly how difficult that process is. In fact, in my experience, suing anybody for less than

\$10,000 or \$20,000 is just not worth your time any more. It's unfortunate because the damages people sustain are real and there should be some kind of incentives or sticks in the enforcement to ensure that people are not taking advantage and are respecting the trails and respecting rights of farmers.

Those of us in the downtown sector are not as conscious, maybe, of the damage we may be doing to an alfalfa patch by inadvertently walking over it, as others aren't as conscious when their dogs are peeing on our front lawn and ruining our rose bushes.

So we will be sending this to committee, and we look forward to making adjustments as it goes forward. It's a great bill. Thank you for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to speak on Bill 36, a bill which seeks two important amendments to the current Trespass to Property Act.

As it currently stands, there is no minimum fine for trespassing on farmland in Ontario, and farmers are entitled to claim up to a mere \$1,000. Bill 36 would impose a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing, address farm safety and biosecurity concerns related to trespassing, and increase the limit on compensation for damages from \$1,000 to \$25,000.

Ontario farm fields are enticing, wide-open spaces for rural neighbours and visitors straying from designated trails or adjacent land. It's not uncommon for these uninvited trespassers to ride around farm fields on their ATVs, damaging crops and property, disturbing animals and even posing a threat to the farm's biosecurity. Biosecurity is becoming an increasing concern on farms, where the spread of plant and animal diseases is a continuous threat. We've all filled out the forms at the airport where we're asked if we're bringing food products or seeds or animal products into the county, because of concerns. And for farmers, of course, this is their livelihood, and they've invested a lot into it. When unwanted visitors enter farm property on foot, they could be bringing a lot worse than just \$1,000 worth of damage. It's not just about footprints on alfalfa; it's much bigger than that.

This is an issue that has risen, not decreased, over the past decade. Trespassing on Ontario farms has become far too common, and the low level of enforcement when offenders are caught and charged means farmers are often on the hook for damages. It's my hope that adding minimum fines and increasing damage awards will elevate the seriousness of this trespassing situation with regional law enforcers and dissuade potential wrongdoers from picking on our province's bread-and-butter workers. Increasing compensation for farmers would go a long way to replacing livestock, crops or any other kind of damages.

You know what? Even though I don't live in a rural riding—Thornhill is really part of the GTA—we have all gone up into cottage country; my dad is up on Lake Chemong, just north of Peterborough. We have had

trespassers who have been fishing—just as the member from the Beaches mentioned before—and just wandered on to your property. They've decided that they needed to come on to dry land for a spell.

I think it's something that people don't necessarily address enough. We have really done a great job educating people that people's bodies are their own and you cannot touch people or touch their personal property; say, their purse or car. But I think we have to address the fact that people's land is not crown land, that it could be private property, and if you're not sure if it's crown land or private property, you should assume that it's private property. You shouldn't say, "Well, I thought it was crown land." If there's no sign suggesting that it is, then you should assume that it's not.

The other issue is insurance. People are liable if somebody comes on their property and gets hurt. We've all heard the tragic stories of people going for a dip in somebody's pool without permission and then, when something happens to them, the property owner is not able to fight by saying, "I did not give this person permission."

So I'm happy to support the member from Dufferin-Caledon's efforts to address this inequity and I hope to see this bill progress quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the member from Dufferin-Caledon's bill, the Respecting Private Property Act, 2014. This has been brought forward and mentioned to me several times also by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, asking for amendments to the Trespass to Property Act that would see minimum fines for trespassing and an increase in the maximum limit for compensation.

1530

I'll read one quote here from Keith Currie, the vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. It says: "The Ontario Federation of Agriculture ... is proud to support Sylvia Jones MPP's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. The OFA has been working with government and policy-makers to amend the Trespass to Property Act for many years. We need this act updated to reflect the severity of trespassing and the damages that result from thoughtless or reckless behaviour."

There's no question, we've heard some stories here. I think we're going to hear one more story this afternoon.

It is more prevalent that trespassing occurs. Maybe it is a minority of people, but the minority of people is growing. They kind of disrespect private property owners. We've talked about farmland and the damages that can be done.

We have ranch land that I don't see very often, but I can tell you that other people are seeing it more than I am, because I can see the fences down—in this case, ATV tracks, I'm sure. There are other people on that land. You can't see it all the time. It's not that well-travelled a road.

By increasing fines in this situation, which the OFA is asking for—a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing on

farmland, and the second amendment, to increase the limit on compensation for damages to \$25,000.

There are valuable crops on these lands. Even footprints in alfalfa fields are damaging and can cause a lot of damage. Replacing fences: My heavens, has anyone priced out fencing lately? It's expensive.

This act needs to be updated. I fully support this member's private property act coming forward. I hope all members do, and I hope the government actually acts and does something about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to just add a real-life example of the kind of reasons why we need to have more-secure laws with regard to trespassing.

It was a few years ago, at night. My husband and I were coming home, and we could see that there were what appeared to be flashlights just outside and around the barn. I was quite nervous, because there were just the two of us; it was in the dead of night. I had no idea how many people were there or what they were doing. Anyway, it turned out to be worm pickers.

I tell the story because not only were they trespassing—and they were our worms—but more importantly, from a safety point of view, there were about 25 head of cattle that were resting around that barn, including a bull. Quite frankly, they were in a lot of potential danger, had those animals been disturbed by them sufficiently to get up and start realizing that there were people they didn't know.

I tell that story because it demonstrates the importance of introducing stronger limits and fines on trespassing and, quite frankly, respect for people's property.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for debate on this item. We return to the member for Dufferin-Caledon for her two-minute response.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I appreciate the feedback from members from all three sides.

I'm going to just raise one issue, because I know there were a couple of people who talked about, and had concerns with, the \$500 minimum fine.

As part of the research for this proposed legislation, I think it's important for the members, particularly on the Liberal side—in 2009, when your own current Minister of Agriculture was a private member, he introduced a private member's bill that would—wait for it—impose a \$500 fine for picking or interfering—

Laughter.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: —I'm glad you see the humour in this—with the Ontario trillium. I am not an exception to suggest that a minimum fine would be appropriate.

Finally, I've said it before, but it bears repeating: We have a lot of people who assist us when we stand in this chamber. In my own office, the standing joke is that there is no lack of ideas that come out of this brain, but we do need staff and people to help us implement those ideas. To Chris and Kevin, I just want to say thank you very much for all of the background, the research, the prepara-

tion you put into getting Bill 36 to the second reading stage.

I look forward to the vote in a short time.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT
(ELECTION OF CHAIR
OF YORK REGION), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS
(ÉLECTION DU PRÉSIDENT
DE LA RÉGION DE YORK)

Mr. Ballard moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of The Regional Municipality of York must be elected / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités pour prévoir que le président du conseil de la municipalité régionale de York doit être élu.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I rise in the House to reintroduce this act to elect the head of council for the regional municipality of York.

I first wanted to start off by thanking my colleagues from the ridings of Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges–Markham for previously presenting this bill and for all of the hard work that they have put into developing the bill. I'm hoping that third time is lucky and that we can finally pass this bill.

I want to say that it has been a pleasure to see the mayors and councillors assume their new duties this week, and I wish the best to Mayor Dawe of Aurora and Mayor Van Bynen of Newmarket and their respective councils. I look forward to working with them to serve our mutual constituents.

This bill embodies an idea that has been a topic of many discussions in York region: discussions about democracy; discussions about fairness, openness and transparency; discussions about accountability. For reasons I'll get into later, I believe the time is now to make the most powerful political position in York region directly accountable to the people whom the chair represents.

First, let me tell you a little bit about how the selection of the chair of York region is currently conducted. York region, as many of you might know, is an upper-tier municipality, comprised of representatives from the lower-tier municipalities that make up the region. The lower tier is comprised of the individual councils of the nine area municipalities—the town of East Gwillimbury, the town of Georgina, the township of King, the city of Markham, the town of Richmond Hill, the city of Vaughan, the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and, of course, the towns of Newmarket and Aurora, which make up my riding.

The upper tier—that is, York regional council—is composed of 21 members. These members include the

nine mayors and 11 regional councillors who are elected at the lower-tier municipalities.

The 21st member is the regional chair and CEO, who is not elected but is appointed by the other 20 members of regional council.

The number of representatives that each municipality elects to regional council ranges from only the mayor, in the smaller municipalities such as Aurora, and up to four regional councillors in the larger ones.

Mayors and regional councillors are elected in a double direct format where successful members are elected to both local council and regional council. The only requirement to hold the position of chair is that the selected individual be a permanent resident of York region.

Heading the regional council, as I said, the chair is currently appointed by regional councillors at the inaugural meeting of the newly elected councillors, and that appointment is at the heart of my bill, because an area that is growing as quickly as York region deserves to have a chair who is directly accountable to the people.

Since the creation of the region in 1971, its population has grown dramatically. In just over 40 years, the region's population has increased more than sevenfold, from 169,000 in 1971 to more than 1.1 million people in 2014.

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During my time as councillor in Aurora, I was always in support of seeing the role of chairperson become an elected position.

I have been told that the inaugural council meeting to select the new regional chair will be held on December 11. I'd like to thank the outgoing chair, Bill Fisch, for his work on behalf of the region of York, and I'm looking forward to working with the new chair.

I want to emphasize at this time the fact that the proposed legislation will not impact the selection of the next chair on December 11.

It's important to note that my hope is that over the next four years, until the next municipal election in 2018, residents of York will have an opportunity to cultivate and perhaps identify candidates for nomination for the position of chair, because I feel that it's time to bring York region into the modern democratic age.

I must thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for her dedication to see this change made. During our discussions, I not only learned that few people in York actually know the name of the chair, but only five individuals have held that position in its 43-year history. That means that, over almost half a century, only Garfield Wright, Bob Forhan, Tony Roman, Eldred King and Bill Fisch have held the powerful position of chair of York region. This bill does not in any way diminish their accomplishments, which are many. However, it's time for a new selection process for the office of regional chair. This bill is about moving forward in a democratic fashion to ensure accountability to the people of York region. The office of the chair has evolved, and it's time for us to move on.

In a region full of growth and expansion, York region deserves to have a direct say in the election of the chair. This is something I firmly believe in, and many of my constituents agree. In fact, I took the last several months since being elected to talk to as many people as possible across York region about this concept, and I would say that, universally, the reaction was positive.

In fact, across York region, as I said, the idea of an elected chair is spreading. In recent editorials in both the *Newmarket Era* and the *Aurora Banner*, the newspapers said that the idea of an elected chair should receive strong support. Both said that it's a move in the right direction.

My constituency office, as well, has heard from many residents who have given me their support in moving ahead with Bill 42.

Let me make this point clear, Mr. Speaker: If passed, this bill will bring more accountability to the office, along with more stature. This bill is about democracy. It's time for the most powerful position in York region government to receive a mandate from the people the chair represents.

During my time as councillor in Aurora, as I've said, I quickly learned the mechanics of regional council, and I must say that the chair and CEO was directly involved in the decision-making processes. There's no confusion about this fact, and that's why I was excited to see initial work being done by the MPPs from Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges–Markham.

I've been supportive of the changes since major discussions started in the mid-1990s.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it has been quite frustrating to see the bill die on the House floor because of an unnecessary election, but it does bring me some satisfaction—besides the fact that that election allowed me to be here—to continue the work of my colleagues and bring forward Bill 42.

I believe it's high time that the position of chair and CEO of York region, as the role is currently entitled, is far too powerful an office for an unelected individual to hold. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you why I and so many of my constituents feel that way.

Let's go over just a few of the powers that the regional chair and CEO currently appointed is responsible for. The regional chair oversees a budget of nearly \$3 billion, including overseeing the debt of the region. He or she would make appointments to regional council committees. The chair has an immense amount of power over how the business of the region is conducted.

The chair, as the only full-time York region council member, is responsible for the operation of services provided by the region of York. The tax-supported services provided by York region are vital to our everyday lives. They include regional planning, transit, community services and housing, court services, emergency medical services or land ambulance, public health, long-term care, employment and financial support, waste management, forestry, roads, provision of water and sewage disposal. Additionally, the chair plays a critical role in

setting the strategic course of the region. Among other initiatives, the chair oversees the implementation of the York region official plan, the transportation master plan and the York region sustainability strategy.

One thing I learned very quickly as a member of the Aurora town council was the impact that the region played on our planning. Some may think that when we're elected to a lower-tier municipality we have significant say over what takes place in our town regarding planning, but that's simply not the case. The region has an awful lot of authority to be able to, whether we're willing or unwilling, help us shape our development. Time and again we heard complaints and concerns from residents of our towns that the region was exercising that authority perhaps against the will of the people who live there. Perhaps a direct election of the chair will go to making that position a little more sensitive to what the people want in their communities.

There are all these plans, as I mentioned, that directly impact the residents of York, including my constituents in Newmarket–Aurora. Something that resonates with me is that the individual in that position gets to wear the chain of office. It's funny how many people assumed that the regional chair was an elected official because they wore the chain of office. The chain, in their mind, denotes a measure of assumed responsibility. Along with the chain of office come certain expectations.

This bill lends legitimacy to the office of chair and CEO. If passed, the chain of office will mean that the individual has received the mandate from the voters of York region. Like mayors and regional chairs across the province, York's chair would face the expectations of York region's electorate.

This demand from York region residents to give the regional chair and CEO a mandate is not a new demand, and more and more regions are converting to this model. The region of Waterloo, for example, has elected its chair for the past 17 years, and the region of Halton has elected its chair for the past 14 years. In Durham region, which has appointed its chair since 1973, it just recently directly elected its first regional chair and CEO in this past 2014 municipal election.

It is time for York region to join other members of the GTHA and assure citizens that they're able to execute their democratic right by directly electing the regional chair and CEO. After bringing this bill to the floor three times now, it's clear that the residents of York region are demanding change. In the past, this bill has received all-party support, and I hope that will happen again today. York region deserves the right to join other members of the GTHA in practising democracy and accountability when electing their regional chair and CEO.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased once again to be able to make a few comments about the suggestion, the initiative, we're looking at here today about a municipal amendment to create an elected chair of York region.

I have to say that I've seen this before. I believe that the first person who initiated it was Frank Klees when he

was the member for Newmarket–Aurora, and then the member for Richmond Hill, Reza Moridi, and then Minister Jaczek. So we've seen this movie before, but it demonstrates the fact that regardless, as time passes, people are still thinking that it's the right way to go.

It has passed second reading before, but it was never called to committee. So I'm pleased to speak to this bill once again, this time introduced by the member for Newmarket–Aurora. I believe that this bill should receive the attention and support of the House.

In the last municipal election, Roger Anderson became the first Durham region elected chair, and there has been a trend of regional chairs becoming elected representatives. Waterloo region started electing its chair in 1997, Halton region in 2000.

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When you look at the size of York region and realize that it is larger than some provinces of this country, it gives you a sense of the complexity and, quite frankly, the incentive to have a fully representational senior, upper-tier government, and with modern technology, direct election is just that much easier than it has been in the past. I look at my own constituents and the complexity of the service delivery in the region and municipality, and the concerns that people have about that complexity and the lack of accountability.

York region is one of Canada's fastest-growing municipalities. When established in 1971, the population was 160,000; York region today has a population of over 1.1 million people.

I hope this bill moves forward and that we are looking at some of the issues further. In my riding, there is a significantly smaller population than in the southerly parts of York region, so my constituents would certainly want to feel that their voices are going to be heard from the northern part of York region. We have a lot of issues in York region of underfunding at the provincial level of the high-growth areas. Again, I would want to make sure that we're going to have that strong elected voice to address some of these issues.

I will certainly support this bill and hope for its passage once again. Otherwise, I'll gladly support it for the fifth time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you to the member opposite for tabling Bill 42, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of The Regional Municipality of York must be elected. I appreciate having the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

What we are really speaking about today is democracy. We are speaking about enshrining into law a mechanism that will ensure that the voices of the people of York are heard.

Winston Churchill once said that "democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others"—and there are some days in this Legislature when I see how he might have come to that conclusion. But, in all

seriousness, I am reminded every day of what this building represents, and that is democracy in action—the voices of all Ontarians represented in this room as we come together to try to make our province a better place. As New Democrats, we know that more democracy is always better, so I am happy to speak in support of this bill today.

As we all know, the role of regional chair has changed drastically since it was first conceived. What was initially a much smaller role has now grown to oversee a budget of over \$3 billion in York region. That is a lot of money, and that is a lot of power. It is important for the people of York to feel that whoever is filling the role of their regional chair will be held accountable for their actions.

Across the province, we have seen a shift away from the appointment of regional chairs to their election at large by the general public. In my region, this was a decision that was made in 2010. On October 27, this year, the region of Durham elected its first regional chair.

In Durham, it was a debate that went on for a number of years and was finally settled by a referendum during the 2010 municipal election. The question posed to all residents of Durham was as follows: "Are you in favour of the council of the regional municipality of Durham passing the necessary resolutions and bylaws to change the method of selecting its chair from appointment by members of regional council to election by general vote of all electors in the region? Yes or no."

It presented a straightforward question and ensured that not only would voters be allowed to choose who their regional chair would be, but also whether it was a change that they even felt they needed.

Ultimately, nearly 80% of those who made it to the polls voted in favour of electing the regional chair, which represented a pretty resounding show of support. Though the result was not technically binding, as voter turnout was less than 50%, council still acted on the recommendation of the referendum and passed a bylaw on April 4, 2012, to change the method of selection to a general vote. Of course, this raises the question of why York region has taken the approach of provincial legislation instead of a local bylaw, but ultimately it will lead to the same result.

This is also a bill that this Legislature has seen a number of times over the past five years, as we have heard, and hopefully we are able to resolve this issue once and for all.

I understand that residents have been surveyed, and the majority have stated their preference for an elected chair as well, though the referendum approach does provide a more official view. Regardless, the opinion of the general public has been taken into account and ensures that the individual in what is often referred to as the highest office in the region is held to account as well.

So far, I have spoken quite a bit about Durham, as it is the piece of the puzzle that I know the best, but a number of other regions have also gone through the process of shifting from an appointed to an elected regional chair. Halton and Waterloo have both made the change, as did

Hamilton-Wentworth before the eventual amalgamation of the municipality. The only regions that continue to select their chairs via council appointment are Peel, Niagara and, of course, York.

As I said earlier, the role of regional chair is one that has changed and evolved over time. As their power has grown, so has the need for greater accountability. Unelected chairs tend to remain in office for an unusually long time, which is even more reason why it is important for the public to have its say.

Seeing as I am coming from the classroom, I figured I should also provide a quick history lesson as well. We have spoken quite a bit about the reasons for this change, but sometimes it can be useful to have that historical context. When Ontario's regional designations were first established in the 1970s, the first regional chairs were appointed by the province with the intention that, going forward, we would follow the county model and allow for appointment by council. But of course, a lot has changed since the 1970s. As the province has grown, so have the powers of the regional chairs. So today we are making sure that the selection of a regional chair evolves along with the role.

As I said earlier in my remarks, what we are really speaking about today is democracy. Democracy is not always easy, and sometimes it can be loud and messy. But it is the foundation of all the things we love about our province and about our country. It is the embodiment of the principle that as a whole we are greater than the sum of our individual parts, and it is why we are all here today. For this reason, I offer my support to this bill, and I ask that you all join me as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jacek: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to speak in support of Bill 42, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of The Regional Municipality of York must be elected, introduced by my colleague the member for Newmarket-Aurora.

As has been said, I presented this bill as Bill 16 in June 2013, and my colleague from Richmond Hill presented this bill as Bill 60 in August 2012. So this is the third time in three years that this bill has been brought forward, which clearly demonstrates our constituents' support for a regional chair who is directly accountable to his or her electorate. Passage of this bill will bring more representative democracy to York region, which, frankly, is absent in regard to the selection of the chair of York regional council.

The idea of electing a chair for York region has been the subject of discussion since at least 1995, when the topic was addressed as part of the York regional council governance review, of which I was project manager. However, it is not surprising that since it was only regional council members who partook in that discussion, no consensus was reached and no action was taken, which is hardly surprising, as it would require regional councillors to give up their exclusive power to select the chair.

I had the privilege of serving as medical officer of health for York region from 1988 and commissioner of health services from 1997 until my retirement in 2006. Both of these roles provided me with the opportunity to witness the tremendous changes that the region has experienced in relation to the growth of the population, the budget and service delivery. In order to reflect these changes, I believe an appropriate governance structure is needed.

At this point, I would like to make sure that all members understand the great deal of power that the York regional chair and CEO has in regard to the business of the region. For example, the chair sets the direction of council, has control over the agenda of council meetings and sits as an ex officio member on all committees. In fact, the chair is the only member of council who works full-time on regional business, as the other councillors must attend to the business of their area municipalities as well.

The responsibilities of the regional chair have increased dramatically as York region has grown. Today, the regional chair is responsible for a budget of nearly \$3 billion. It is quite astonishing that responsibility for these taxpayer dollars is vested in an unelected official. Furthermore, the regional chair is the official spokesperson for the region and frequently has a role in representing the region on the national and even international stage. As York region's website suggests, its economy, at \$43 billion, is bigger than four Canadian provinces, and an elected chair would give added legitimacy in this circumstance as well.

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I would like to acknowledge, however, that this bill does not in any way diminish the accomplishments of the five individuals who have held the position over the last 42 years, specifically Garfield Wright, Bob Forhan, Tony Roman, Eldred King and Bill Fisch. I've known them all. Unfortunately, three of these gentlemen have passed away, but I can personally attest to their hard work and the important contributions they've made. Moreover, I would like to take this moment to acknowledge the current chair, Bill Fisch, who, after 17 years, has decided to retire. I'd like to personally thank him for his years of service and tireless dedication in helping to build York region.

However, at this point in time, I believe it is time to join other regions of the GTHA and modernize the selection process for the office of the York regional chair. Often, I'll ask my constituents if they know the name of the current regional chair. With the exception of some municipal employees and a few others, it is rare to find anyone who does. By contrast, the name of their local mayor is almost universally known.

Allowing the citizens of York region to elect their regional chair will help underscore the importance of this position. If the chair of York regional council is elected by citizens, the individuals who seek election will likely develop a platform that outlines a vision for the region. Upon election, accountability to the electorate will be

clear. At the subsequent election, the electorate can judge whether the incumbent deserves re-election. This is representative democracy and this is the direction York region must go.

The passage of this bill is important to me, to the more than 240,000 constituents in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham and to all the residents of York region. Next Thursday, I will be attending the inaugural meeting of York regional council for the ninth time. I hope that when the following inaugural council meeting occurs in 2018, it will be in the presence of a directly elected chair.

I ask my colleagues from all sides of the House to support the member for Newmarket–Aurora in passing this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm delighted to speak today in favour of Bill 42. I haven't been here for all of the other presentations of this similar bill since I was only elected this past year, but I've been a resident of York region in Thornhill for over 26 years.

I think that one of the important points that maybe isn't getting through today is that so many people in York region aren't even aware that there is a chairperson of York region. A lot of people, especially the newcomers, are unaware that there's an entire level of government. Toronto used to have Metro—I think people remember that. We're not going to talk about whether or not the city should have been amalgamated. It does come up for discussion every now and then in York region—whether there should be the city of York region. I'll have to ask the member from Newmarket–Aurora if he hears about that every now and then as well.

We do have this level of government in York region, the regional government, and other regional governments have moved towards making the chairperson an elected position. Right now, in case people watching at home don't understand, what happens is that the regional council is made up of regional councillors, of course, and the mayors of six cities in York region. It's not exactly evenly distributed by population how the numbers work out for representation on the council. I live in Vaughan, and Vaughan has three regional councillors and one mayor who sit on the council, and they represent a population of over 300,000 people. There are much smaller communities which are perhaps a quarter or a sixth of the population of Vaughan but have significantly more representation per person, if you work it out. If we're talking about democratic principles, it's not very democratic just on that principle, if I can say it that way, that these regional councillors and mayors of the various cities are choosing the chairperson.

Just for the record, the chairperson of York region is a very desirable position. The salary is higher than in the city of Toronto. Bill Fisch recently retired. I would have liked to have gone to his retirement dinner. I'm sure the minister was there, but my invitation must have gotten lost in the mail.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: A little dig there, yes, in case you didn't know that small people had claws.

But the point is that it's a very desirable—and, can I say, even lucrative—position. It's a big responsibility, and I'm not saying that there shouldn't be good remuneration for it, but right away we are waiting until after the recent municipal election to talk about who the next chair is going to be. Who are putting their names forward? People who have just been elected within months, within weeks. They've just been elected in expensive elections, and they're putting their names forward—wonderful candidates.

I know John Taylor fairly well, because when I did a talk show on Rogers he was my guest a couple of times. He's putting his name forward, as is, I think, the mayor of Stouffville, and regional councillor Jim Jones, whom I have a lot of respect for, in Markham. What happens when one of them is inevitably chosen? It means that we have to have a by-election in an entire city, because for regional councillors and the mayor it's not a small ward; it's the entire city of Markham, Vaughan or Newmarket—or Stouffville, King City or Aurora. I'm sorry if I'm missing something in there.

But this, to me, is a waste of taxpayers' money. If we're going to appoint a chairperson—which we have to, because we just had the election—why couldn't it have been done before the election? That's number one.

Number two is that the regional council has a lot of say on our regional roads. I'm often talking to people in Thornhill and across York region about the rapidways that are being built on regional roads. This is something that the regional council decides, and I feel that, if the chairperson was an elected position, he would feel a little more uncomfortable with choosing to go forward with a project that the residents are so much against.

Obviously, I support this bill. I'm unsure why this has been debated for so many hours in the House. It's sort of like having elections over and over again, and by-elections; it's very expensive. I think that it behooves all of us to respect the taxpayers' money and respect all of our time and the taxpayers' time, so I hope to see this go through and that, at the next municipal elections across Ontario in four years, York region will be electing a chair for the York region council.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today to speak to Bill 42, the Municipal Amendment Act (Election of Chair of York Region), 2014. The role of the regional chairs has evolved dramatically over the years. In this particular case, for York region, the position that we are talking about oversees a budget of more than \$3 billion, which of course has been mentioned by several of the MPPs. That's probably a significant piece as to why this bill was brought forward: because a budget of \$3 billion should equal accountability and transparency. I think that's what the member who introduced it in the House and members before him have stressed. It's important that people feel that their tax dollars are being used

wisely, and that the person representing that fiscal budget is elected.

We are taught from a very young age that the best form of government is one that the people elects, where citizens participate in the process by voting for their choice of representatives. But here we have an instance in York region that escapes that direct application of democracy through appointment, instead of electing their chair.

Currently only Peel, Niagara and York regions continue to select their chair through council appointment. However, it should be noted that Niagara does have a policy on the books that requires that the chair be an elected member of council, while Peel and York do not.

We are seeing greater and greater calls for transparency and accountability at all levels of government. The more we continue to operate in the shadows, the less trust we inspire in those we aim to represent. This bill is an important step in the right direction.

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It shows the people of this province that we can adapt outdated forms of governance to become democratically accountable and to truly reflect their will. Given that direct democracy allows citizens the most control over their government, electing our regional chairs should be seen as the best method of selection. In fact, representatives who depend on re-election to keep their jobs must reflect the will of the people who voted for them and not their own personal or political agendas.

Also, I have grave concerns regarding the fairness of the appointment process. We know that women make up 48% of the workforce in Canada but account for only about 16% of board members of Canada's FP500 companies. In fact, out of 448 companies that responded to a recent government survey, 57% have no women directors, 53% have women in fewer than 10% of their executive officer positions, and none of this speaks to the lack of representation of people of colour and other marginalized demographics in our community.

If we look back to where this process of appointment began, it will take us back to 1849, when the system of local government was established by the Baldwin Act. That's a long time, Speaker. The head of the county council was called a warden, and the warden was selected by the county councillors for a one-year term.

When Ontario regions were created in the 1970s, the first regional chairs were appointed by the province, but the system going forward was meant to be like the county system, in that regional chairs would be selected by councillors.

However, over time, regional chairs were given greater leadership and abilities than wardens, because regional chairs are selected for the full term of council. Over time, there has been a movement from selection and secrecy to popular election of regional chairs. It's also important to note that unelected regional chairs tend to remain in office for an unusually long time, suggesting that the position depends more on political favours than democratic legitimacy. We have seen the movement and a push toward greater accountability for several regions,

including Halton, Waterloo, Hamilton-Wentworth and Durham.

I have a sense that appointed officials who serve at the pleasure of local municipal officials are concerned less with voters' rights and turnout and more with administrative burdens, costs and security. While those are important issues to consider, when any appointee is responsible for a \$3-billion budget, we must defer to the people. They must have a seat at the table through a democratic process, and what better way to achieve this than by giving voters exactly what they voted for?

Now it's time for Peel region to follow the lead of other governments, and it is up to all of us here to ensure that we help them get there. The legislation can help to make that vision a reality, and I encourage all members of the House to support this bill.

Obviously, the government side has brought this bill to this Legislative Assembly more than once. Perhaps any bill we could speak to, we can say what our feelings are, but moving it forward sounds like the right thing to do, and helping it along so that the people of York region are served in the best capacity with an elected official, with a budget of \$3 billion, and have that responsibility and accountability, as we all should as elected officials when you have the public purse, and do the right thing.

I thank you for the time that I was allowed to speak on this bill, and congratulate the member for bringing it forward. I hope he's successful this time around.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 42. First and foremost, I want to thank a few people. I want to thank the MPP from Oak Ridges-Markham and also the MPP from Richmond Hill for introducing the bill previously. Of course, I want to thank the MPP from Newmarket-Aurora for bringing the bill forward again—of course, a differently numbered bill.

I supported this bill before, and I'm very, very happy to see it reintroduced. As MPP for Markham-Unionville, I represent 136,857 people. That's a lot.

Interjection: Maybe someone was born since then.

Hon. Michael Chan: With a baby born last night, it would be one more.

They have elected me as their representative since 2007. The local council of Markham has eight councillors and a mayor, all of whom are democratically elected. Markham also has four regional councillors, who sit on both the local council and also on the regional council. These, as well, are all elected positions.

At the centre of Bill 42 is the spirit of democracy and accountability. It seems odd to me that the regional chair, who leads the regional council, is not elected. The chair is the face of the entire region but is accountable only to the council. Now that our region is one of the fastest-growing areas in the country, it's time for a change.

Accountability is a virtue in our democracy that Canadians value. The residents of York region are no different. The chair directs the vision for the region. Cur-

rently, those on the council appoint the individual who sets that vision, not the people of York region.

Across the province, electing the chair of the region is a very common trend. The region of Waterloo, as mentioned before, has elected their regional chair since 1997; along with Halton region, which has elected their chair since 2000. We recently saw Durham region, which has appointed its chair since 1973, elect the first regional chair in the 2014 municipal election. It's time for York region to do the same.

Passing Bill 42 will allow York region to join other members of the GTHA in practising democracy and accountability when electing the regional chair; the citizens of York region will be able to determine what vision they want for the future. Through elections, the residents of York region and the 136,857 constituents I represent will have more choice. We are doing the 1.1 million residents of York region a disservice by not providing them with the ability to choose their regional chair. As outlined by my colleagues from Newmarket–Aurora and Oak Ridges–Markham, the chair of a region holds a great deal of power and needs to be accountable to the residents and not just the 20 members of regional council.

Across the country, accountability and transparency are important parts of our democracy. York region is facing an accountability and transparency deficit with the selection of the regional chair. Bill 42 seeks to fix that.

Once again, I would like to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this bill to the floor yet again, and the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for supporting this bill. When Bill 42 has been introduced in the past, it received all-party support, and I hope to see that repeated. I gladly support this bill, and I hope the members of this House will do the same. So far, what I have heard is that they are going to support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the Municipal Amendment Act, and I want to congratulate the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this bill forward—we keep hearing for the third time, but I believe it's the fourth time this bill has been before the House. As critic for municipal affairs and housing for the Conservative Party, I want to say we will be supporting this bill.

This bill would allow the chair of York region to be directly elected by the people he or she represents. It would increase accountability and democracy. Currently in York region, after each election, the council appoints a non-elected person to be chair. That means the most senior municipal regional representative doesn't receive a single vote from the people he or she represents. Mr. Speaker, it would be like having the mayor of Toronto appointed by Toronto city councillors instead of being elected by the people.

This system has evolved from the county system, where a warden is chosen by council. But one important difference is that the warden is chosen from the elected members on council, which means that they have already

been democratically elected in their own area. Of course, then they maintain that seat during the term that they are the warden. I had the privilege of being one of those. For three years I was mayor of South-West Oxford and at the same time I was the warden of Oxford county, which for all practical purposes was the region of Oxford county.

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In fact, as I said, the fourth time it has been here, and it has been unanimously supported all three times it was here. It highlights a problem with our system. Since this bill was first introduced in April 2012, we have gone through a municipal election where this change could have been implemented. In fact, given that the previous chair was retiring after five terms this past election, it might have been an ideal time for the change to occur. Now, even if this bill is passed quickly, the people of York region won't have the opportunity to vote for their chair until the 2018 municipal election.

That's part of the problem we have with private members' bills. Regardless of how much support they have, they have difficulty getting to third reading. I can attest to that, having gone through five years with a private member's bill: five times introduced, five times unanimously supported, but it still took five years to get it passed, and it just passed this year.

We all agree that this bill would increase the accountability and make the system more democratic, and the people of York region want the change. It's hard to understand why we have debated it three times.

Again, I want to commend the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this bill forward, but I want to encourage all the members who so courageously stood up today and supported the bill to keep the pressure on the government House leader and the House leaders from the other two parties to not only agree with this bill today, but bring this bill forward for third reading and get it passed so in 2018 we can have true democracy with the chair in York region.

Thank you very much for allowing me to say a few words to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: It's an honour to stand in this House today alongside Minister Jaczek and Minister Chan in support of Bill 42. I applaud my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora for reintroducing this bill.

As the MPP from Durham, I can attest to the growing demand for the regional chair and CEO to be an elected position due to the great deal of power it holds. In Durham region, the regional chair and CEO is responsible for a \$1.3-billion budget and over 6,000 employees. The demand for this position to be elected is evident in the recent change in Durham region to elect our regional chair and CEO.

I am proud to say that in the 2014 municipal election, the region of Durham elected its first regional chair and CEO. This election sparked new public intrigue and we saw six candidates run for the position.

Although the region took a different approach implementing this transition, it is evident that citizens are

realizing that it holds a great deal of influence and responsibility. These citizens want to hold their regional chair and CEO accountable. In order for that to happen, she or he must be elected.

I am happy to see that York region aims to follow in the footsteps of Durham region and other regions in the GTHA. I commend the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this bill forward yet again. Hopefully, this time we can pass this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The only concern I have about this is that the only people who can afford to run for these offices are rich people. They're usually Conservatives—I just say that. But the rich people are the people who can afford to run, and regular people can't afford to run. That's my concern about these regional chair elections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? No further debate?

The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Very briefly, I want to thank the MPPs from York–Simcoe, Oshawa, Richmond Hill, Thornhill, London–Fanshawe, Markham–Unionville, Oxford and Durham for their—oh, I've left one out, the minister and the Chair of Cabinet; I'm sorry—words of support for this bill.

I think it has all been said, that really what we're talking about here is fundamental democracy. When the region of York was set up under the warden system, it was simpler times—certainly smaller budgets and less responsibility for that position. But, as we've all said, times have changed, and the position of chair needs to evolve so that the residents of our towns and cities will have direct representation.

I just wanted to take a few seconds, as well, to thank the members who have filled the position of regional chair over the years. Their names have been spoken of, and I know that my fellow member has worked with and knows most of them and speaks quite highly of them. I don't think, frankly, that the region would be where it is today if it wasn't for their stewardship and guidance and hard work.

Once again, I just wanted to reiterate that this bill in no way takes away or diminishes from the hard work of past regional chairs. It's just that the time has come. The people have spoken. They truly do want to see some change. From some conversations I've had with recently elected regional councillors, I know they understand that change is coming, and they look forward to a new way of doing things. We'll see that soon, I hope.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for private members' public business has expired.

COMMERCIAL FILL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 19, standing in the name of Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Anderson has moved private members' notice of motion number 15.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

RESPECTING PRIVATE PROPERTY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE RESPECT DE LA PROPRIÉTÉ PRIVÉE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Jones has moved second reading of Bill 36, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I would like to refer Bill 36 to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (ELECTION OF CHAIR OF YORK REGION), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS (ÉLECTION DU PRÉSIDENT DE LA RÉGION DE YORK)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Ballard has moved second reading of Bill 42, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of The Regional Municipality of York must be elected.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the

Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, the Education Act and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts / Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et apportant des modifications corrélatives et connexes à d'autres lois.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT (AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE ACT, 1996), 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'ASSURANCE AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996 SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): At the conclusion of the last session, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk had the floor.

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Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker, and I do appreciate the opportunity to pick up where I left off during that one hour allotted to me to discuss Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

I left off discussing the need for this province to help our beekeepers by adopting bee insurance programs, which we're seeing in the western provinces. In fact, during question period yesterday, I specifically asked Premier Wynne, "Why have you not implemented a Manitoba-type insurance model to help our Ontario beekeepers?" It has been 11 years. We know that Manitoba has a working program. The province of Alberta has a working program.

I had a supplementary question, and I put the question: "Will Ontario at least consider the pilot project Saskatchewan has in place to provide risk insurance ... to help our beekeepers in Ontario?"

I'll be attending the EBR session next Tuesday—that would be December 9; it commences at 1 p.m.—at the

Lamplighter Inn in London. I know my seatmate, Lisa Thompson, will be there. We're going to hold a media availability at 12 o'clock. So that's a good thing. At least there are three meetings being held with respect to neonics.

I fully support hearings on this particular legislation. As legislation that affects rural and farm Ontario, I think it's very important that we have a standing committee travel the province on this particular piece of legislation, Bill 40.

I recall a number of years ago, when we were in government—at that time, we brought in the Nutrient Management Act. But even before we brought in the legislation, former MPP Doug Galt, who was, I think, a critic at the time—I was environment critic. We travelled the province, holding hearings, east and west, with respect to nutrient management. We brought in the legislation. Second reading referred it to the justice committee, which I chaired at the time. We travelled the province again and held hearings on nutrient management. The legislation passed. Then it was time for regulation. We travelled the province again and talked to farmers, spent a week, or maybe two weeks, discussing regulation.

Citizen participation and public consultation of that order, I feel, is very important, especially with respect to some of the agricultural bills that we have seen come through this Legislature.

I'll move from bees to hogs. I want to talk a little bit about our hog industry. I understand hog farmers are interested in this production insurance program. They have asked for it.

The member for Perth–Wellington isn't here. He knows an awful lot about the hog industry. He has been hauling hogs all over North America for many years. I'm more of a sheep man myself. The member for Perth–Wellington, Randy Pettapiece, and his hog industry, trucking industry, they refer to sheep as winter hogs. I've never thought of sheep as winter hogs—you know, woolly things.

I'm just looking at some figures. For 2013, Canadian hog numbers: 12.9 million. That's down from 14.7 million in 2003.

I have limited experience with hogs. I know on our home farm, my great-grandfather's farm, we have a pigpen: six sows. There were always six sows. They had their own little apartments, kind of little condos, with a common corridor and then everything went outside. Hogs are very, very clean animals. I can attest to that.

So you've got six sows. That's still 300 offspring every year. It kept us busy. We still have that pigpen. My sister and brother-in-law fixed it up. We gather in that pigpen. It's got a woodstove now and a bar, and we get together there, certainly on St. Patrick's Day every year. So it continues as part of our complex of farms.

I know my parents, on our home farm, we always had two pigs every year. This was when I was very young. Every year there were always two pigs. We'd feed them all summer. One was named Dale. One was named Chip. They were always together. Chip and Dale: Those were

the two pigs. I was very young at the time. I never really thought about it, but they disappeared in the fall and then two more would arrive in the spring. We'd feed them again—Chip and Dale—and this went on for years and years. I never really put two and two together, being fairly young at the time.

I've helped castrate pigs. That's not my favourite job. Like I say, I'm a sheep man.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That doesn't sound like a good job.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I beg your pardon?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That doesn't sound like a good job.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it's an important job. It's not inhumane. I'm not talking humans; I'm talking pigs, okay? But I can tell you, now that we're getting into this, that my specialty is castrating sheep. I can castrate 300 lambs in a little under 10 days, and I can dock the tails at the same time. There are good reasons for this. I don't want to get distracted. It's the nature of farming.

But there is something very serious in the hog industry: the disease porcine epidemic diarrhea—the short form is PED. It has hit our hog industry. It's hit the hog industry in my home county of Norfolk. It's a virus that cannot be transmitted to humans, but it does cause the death of piglets. It causes weight loss in older animals. Then something else came up: the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. It's been a tough year for the hog industry.

I know that this summer I had a pork barbecue. I know this sounds inhumane; anyone here who does eat bacon, maybe we could argue that's inhumane. But I had a pork barbecue this summer. It was pretty well attended. We advertised it. We sent the word out to people: "Come out to our pork barbecue and send Putin a message." That's just our small way of trying to communicate on the international stage down in Dunnville.

We held it at the Dunnville Airport. The Dunnville Airport, believe it or not, has six gigantic Samsung turbines on it. You'll never see another airplane come into the Dunnville airport. It's very unfortunate. I don't know; money changed hands and things happen.

Back to PED, the pig disease: It's a viral disease. It's associated with vomiting and diarrhea. High death loss: As I recall, we've lost 30% of the herd in Ontario's pork industry. It comes from the coronavirus family and infects the cells lining the small intestine. It's very bad news for the little ones, the piglets. Millions of baby pigs have passed away in the United States over the past year. The first case showed up in Ontario, as I recall, in Middlesex county in January. Very soon afterward, I recall it being at a Norfolk county farm. It's a very difficult virus to contain. It's an infectious disease.

I know that the pork producers had their regional meeting down my way at the Greens at Renton, just up Cockshutt Road from where I am. Much of the discussion did centre around PED and the concern about assistance and funding for farms devastated by this disease.

Both the federal and provincial governments did step up; credit for that. The federal government immediately allowed a vaccine that was undergoing preliminary testing in the United States to be imported into Canada to be used as a precautionary measure. The Ontario government—credit for this—pledged \$2 million to help boost biosecurity and stop the spread of the virus.

Again, it can be transmitted by a dirty tread on a work boot or an infected loading chute on a tractor-trailer. Our American counterparts have been very helpful on this front. Both sides are working together. They recognize that we have very strict biosecurity in the province of Ontario.

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I visited a hog operation a few years ago, operated by the Bartels brothers. Compare going into a hog barn to going into a hospital. You're not allowed into a hog barn unless, first of all, you take all your clothes off. You walk into and have a hot shower, and then you're given another set of clothes. This is called biosecurity. Compare that to the security in a hospital. Then, when you leave again, you exchange clothes, you have another shower and then put your clothes back on—very strict biosecurity. Farmers go into a hog barn and they stay there all day. They have, in this operation, a full-blown kitchen: cupboards, stoves, everything. I wonder why our hospitals don't run that way, quite honestly, given the infectious diseases that come out of some of those institutions.

So I understand there are about 64 confirmed cases on farms in Ontario. Exports are so important for our Ontario hog market. We export far more to the US than we bring in. The flow of animals goes south; the trucks return empty. The trucks are probably where the virus came up, even though they're washed, disinfected and dried at cleaning stations before they would come back to Ontario farms.

I see my time is running out. I'd like to switch quickly to the cattle industry, beef cattle. We all recall the BSE contagion a number of years ago. It was out west. Here is an industry that also could benefit from the kind of proactive measures that we are debating in this Legislature today. I had the good fortune to grow up with cattle, both beef and dairy. We had dual-purpose Polled Shorthorns. "Polled" means you don't have to cut their horns off; genetically, they arrive without horns.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: We raised horned Herefords.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Horned Herefords: I just heard that mentioned.

It's a breed not as popular now. Dual-purpose: You raise them for beef but you milk them at the same time. It's one of those older English breeds. I know our family had raised them for generations. Oftentimes we see cattle now on some of the gully land or the rocky land; you certainly see it up in northern Ontario. There's a lot of potential to move beef into northern Ontario. Over the last 10 years, Ontario has lost half the herd. I know in Haldimand county, down my way, half the head of cattle

are down there now than there used to be. Essentially half the beef farmers switched over to cash crops.

Let's see. In 2002, the Canadian beef industry was worth about \$8 billion, and in 2003, 17% of the fed cattle in our country were here in Ontario. We're the second-largest producer after Alberta.

Before that BSE outbreak, half the Canadian beef production was intended for export; the vast majority of live animal exports were headed to the United States. Meat exports were 70% to the Americans, with the remainder split between Mexico, Japan, South Korea, certainly. A number of years ago I was the parliamentary assistant to agriculture. We would have meetings in Toronto with the Korean beef buyers. This would be further down Bloor, around Christie Pits. There's a famous Korean restaurant down that way. We'd get together down there.

With the BSE, obviously the prices plummeted. You didn't really see it at the retail level. This is an age-old concern of farmers, where the middleman reaps much of the profit and we don't see the benefit for the consumer in the grocery store. It was estimated that at that time the Canadian beef sector was losing something like \$11 million a day because of BSE trade bans. Fortunately, with pork, with PED, we're not seeing the trade bans, even though we're so dependent on exporting our pork. The Canadian Animal Health Coalition in June 2003 pegged the total economic impact of a four-month trade ban at \$2.5 billion, and it kept building up over the years. After two years, Canada lost something like \$7 billion. There was no production insurance, no mortality insurance—everything was ad hoc—the importance of what we're talking about today.

It even hit the dairy industry. It's not their bread and butter, but dairy producers, dairymen, sell their older animals for beef. In the abattoir, every animal counts. In the abattoir, they don't just sell steaks, they sell everything—everything coming together to make a profit.

I mentioned that we always had sheep. Somebody in the family, since then, has always had sheep. We used to have Shropshires—small, little animals. They kind of got bred out of existence in the show ring: Putting wool over their faces and around their tails is not a good idea.

If there's a good reason to have Bill 40, to have agricultural production insurance for sheep or goats—I used to have a few goats. I'll never do that again. You come home with a brand new car, and you come out the next morning and the goats are standing on top of your brand new car. I cannot handle goats. If you want training to be an elected representative, get a couple of goats. It will teach you how to deal with issues.

If there were ever reasons for this kind of livestock insurance for sheep—I'll mention a few: sheep nasal fly; blowflies; there are about 25 different parasitic worms that can infect sheep—stomach worm disease, for example, very serious, long worms; coccidiosis; blackleg; malignant edema; I can't pronounce this one—I don't think we ever had it—enterotoxemia; even tetanus or lockjaw.

There are several reasons why our sheep producers should be watching what we're doing in this Legislature. It's all to the good: transferring the principles of crop insurance to livestock insurance. I think it's a good idea.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk for his very educated talk on farming. The member is very knowledgeable.

I understand that we are the only province that does not allow for production insurance for the broader range of agricultural products, and the member from—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Huron—Bruce.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes—so my colleagues from the Conservative Party are absolutely right. Sometimes it's very strange that Ontario is so behind things, especially with the agriculture area. We all agree how important it is that we have a sustainable, strong agricultural part of our economic growth, yet sometimes we need to make sure that as we promote that. We want to have buy-local and have healthy agricultural farmers contribute to our society; we need to support them. This legislation is making that change where it's expanding the coverage so that it's not just about the crops; it's also including livestock.

This is a step forward, and I know that farmers will embrace it, because as the member from Haldimand-Norfolk mentioned, he talked about the tragedies in some of these areas, the pig farmers and the cattle farmers, and how that can affect their livelihood. What affects their livelihood also translates back to the consumer. So it's important that we have support systems for farmers so that they can deliver healthy products to consumers such as ourselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

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Mr. Arthur Potts: Thanks to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for his discussion on this bill and his support. It's always a pleasure listening to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, who is so passionate about the agricultural industry and so knowledgeable. He distills that knowledge to this House in such an affable way, and it's just a delight to listen to. I'm always now going to be looking over to you, knowing that at some point in your life you were associating with Chip and Dale. I think it's just fascinating that you could relate those great stories from your past—maybe a wolf in sheep's clothing at times, nonetheless very knowledgeable.

You talked—and I listened very intently—earlier in your speech about premium holidays. I think that's a good discussion that we can have at committee as we hear from other people; and the ease of filling out forms. These are very important considerations. We have a lot of experience in this province with crop insurance. I can assure you that the Agriculture Insurance Act—those form-filling programs will be equally as accessible, as they've been developed over the years. That's very important because as people enter into the program, we

want to make sure it's accessible and the ease of entry is there, but also at the same time to make sure that all the best management practices are followed, so that we're insuring people for the right reasons.

Now, we've talked about three key areas. I think you were discussing bees, pork and beef, all of which are obviously under consideration. Should this bill get passed, those will be the discussions that we'll be having with each of the industries, through Agricorp, in order to determine what is the best program, what it should be addressing, but particularly with bees and the neonics. The member keeps talking about what we're doing now with neonics is a ban, and it really isn't. Let's be clear to the public: This is an aspirational target. We've identified that something like 20% of where it's used it's really effective and it needn't be used prophylactically across the province. We're going to monitor that very carefully, but it is bee health and I'm sure bees will be considered another one of the areas to be covered by agricultural insurance. So thank you for your comments, member.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock

Ms. Laurie Scott: Excellent, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. It's a hard riding name at times.

I'm pleased to rise today to make comment on my caucus colleague, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, who gave extensive and very detailed knowledge of his farm history and his family's history on the farm—very proudly so. That's the type of information the government does need to listen to: people who have the experience in the fields.

He mentioned that he was PA when the previous government was doing the nutrient management plan and the fact that they travelled the province. They listened to the input so they could get it right. Then the bigger part that I wanted to highlight is the fact of the regulations, which sometimes don't get consulted on enough, to make sure those kinds of details of how it's actually going to work—the legislation's framework, the regulations or the details, to make sure you get those details right, especially in agriculture. We're in the city, here in Toronto at Queen's Park, and a lot of the staff just aren't as in tune to the people who work the land and deal in the agricultural business as much. I thank him for making a highlight of the fact: Don't stop consulting as legislation evolves, for sure.

He brought forward questions this week about the bees and neonicotinoids, which is a very topical issue that's facing the whole province, the whole country: bee mortality. Listening to solid science advice is always the most practical and reasonable way to tackle an issue. The fact that this program expands the Agriculture Insurance Act to other commodities is something I think that we and the agricultural community have been saying for a while too.

We're happy to support this bill and even happier to be able to have it in committee and to listen to some comments to shore it up a little more stably, if it needs to be.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to address the comments made by my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk. It was actually quite interesting to listen to some of the personal anecdotes. I wouldn't have thought that I have any personal anecdotes when it comes to farming, but my father is making a foray into chicken farming and is entertaining the idea of raising goats, so I will have to pass along the goats on the cars piece of that.

This is obviously an important piece of legislation. It might be 10 or 11 years behind, but it's a step in the right direction. As we can see, it's an enabling piece of legislation, allowing the government to proceed and make changes to allow the government to expand coverage to products like livestock.

The member from Haldimand-Norfolk reminded us and talked about PED, which is a disease affecting our pigs and piglets. Interestingly, for PED to have followed on the heels of a sow reduction initiative had huge ramifications and obviously posed huge challenges for our pig farmers and the pork industry specifically. There are a few pig farmers in the area that I was connecting with, and they were talking about the struggles and challenges they face on a basis that I think the government needs to factor in. Farming is an ever-changing field—no pun intended. I'm certainly hoping that they're doing any of their policies and any of their pieces of legislation in close consultation with our farmers.

We know how important farming is, of course. My colleague from Welland spoke the other day about food bank use. We know that people need to be fed, and we need to ensure that that happens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do appreciate the comments, and I find the debate interesting. I just think it's so important. We have quite an opportunity here to get this legislation right. We see so many safety net programs across the country; they come and they go. There used to be GRIP and NISA and on and on, and they change and change again. So we can get this one right.

The reason I say that is because in Ontario and Canada and the United States, we have quite a history with a specific program, the crop insurance program. Crop insurance goes back to 1938, when it was first established in the United States by the federal government to provide some stability with the dust bowl and the Depression. I know they did update it. It was first set up by the Federal Crop Insurance Corp. It focused on the major crops. They revised and expanded it. In 1980 they expanded it again, and in 1994. They're still taking a look at it because, gosh, a year ago something like \$14 billion went to farmers for safety nets in the US—this is who we're competing against. This past year, it's down to \$6 billion.

I feel that we can get this right. I think we should take the time. We support the bill. I think my specific request is, this is brand new legislation. This isn't a reintroduced

bill where the government got behind because of a minority government. It's brand new legislation. Let's not time-allocate it. Let's take the time to debate it, get it to a standing committee and get it out for public hearings. You will be amazed at what you're going to hear from farmers—the knowledge and wisdom that's out there across rural Ontario. I think it would be rewarding for all of us—certainly, to come up with good legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to rise in this House and express the feelings of the NDP caucus and my leader, Andrea Horwath. Today it's a special honour for me because we're talking about an agriculture subject. As a farmer, I never thought I would ever stand in the Legislature and talk about agriculture, so it's an incredible honour for me.

Before I begin on Bill 40, it's been a fairly agricultural day here in the Legislature. We've discussed contaminated soil on farmland, something the government could act on, on Monday. We've discussed trespass rights, property rights, something that the government—maybe not Monday, but Tuesday.

But I really, really want to stress the one on contaminated soil. That's one that needs to be acted upon. There's no political animosity to stop it. The only thing that's stopping action on contaminated soil is whether the government has the will to do it. That's the only thing that's stopping that issue.

1700

Mr. Han Dong: We'll have to time-allocate it.

Mr. John Vanthof: You've time-allocated everything else. You've time-allocated everything else, so what's stopping you?

Hon. James J. Bradley: You won't be reasonable.

Mr. John Vanthof: The minister without portfolio, who I really respect, says we're not being reasonable, but the government hasn't given the other parties a chance to be reasonable.

But let's return to the project at hand, which is Bill 40.

Je vais commencer par lire le titre du projet de loi 40 : Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

Je vais continuer avec la note explicative :

« Le projet de loi modifie la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte afin d'en étendre la portée. La Loi s'applique actuellement aux récoltes de produits de la culture et aux plantes vivaces; le projet de loi fait en sorte que la loi s'applique à tous les produits agricoles que le ministre désigne par règlement.

« Le titre de la loi est modifié pour tenir compte de l'extension de sa portée. »

The English version of that—I'm going to actually read from the Hansard from the minister's opening on this, and he explained part of it very well. This is from Minister Leal:

"As we all know, Ontario farmers grow and harvest a diverse range of crops and livestock. When unforeseen challenges such as pests, weather and disease strike,

production insurance is there to provide coverage for losses and yield reductions. In Ontario, production insurance is currently available for nearly 90 different agricultural products, but Ontario farmers grow and raise more than 200 commodities. This leaves some farmers' products ineligible for production insurance.

"If passed, the proposed"—and here's where I have a bit of a problem, this next sentence. And before I go any farther, we support this legislation, very much so. I said in my opening statement when I responded to Minister Leal a few days ago that the one thing about this legislation was that this legislation was actually at least 10 years too late, because the actual impetus for this legislation was passed at the fed-prov agricultural ministers' meeting of 2003. The parliamentary assistant to the minister said that this was moving forward "with haste."

Mr. Arthur Potts: We already addressed that question.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, we're going to address that question again. "With haste," the parliamentary assistant said. "With haste" is 11 years. Well, this government has been in power for 11 years.

In response, the parliamentary assistant said, and once again I'd like to quote from Hansard:

"I particularly want to address the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. It's fantastic that he has pointed out that it has been 12 years. I'd like to point out, of course, that in those 12 years there was a different member for Beaches-East York. As he notes, the great agricultural riding of Beaches-East York was commented on earlier. Maybe that was the big change in the last 12 years in this government, that there's a different member from the wonderful riding of Beaches-East York. I would celebrate that it has only been a scant six months since I had the pleasure of being elected to this House following the last election and being appointed as the parliamentary assistant to agriculture. Maybe that is the key ingredient as to why we're finally able to move forward with this...."

Well, when I was in another life, when I was working with Dairy Farmers of Ontario, when I was working with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, I had the honour of working with many Ministers of Agriculture—Steve Peters, Carol Mitchell, Leona Dombrowsky, the Premier, the minister who I believe is now the Minister of Municipal Affairs—and I bet you they would be surprised to learn that it's the member from Beaches-East York that is the only reason this government is now bringing this forward: the man who doesn't know the difference between an alfalfa field and an alfalfa patch.

Laughter.

Mr. John Vanthof: This isn't funny. This is why many farmers have trouble believing that the government actually understands them when they see statements like this. We all know that it's not one member or another member. The real reason that this legislation, in our opinion, is being brought forward now—10 years too late, but brought forward nevertheless—is because, yes, the government is taking a bit of heat on the neo-

nicotinoid issue right now. I'm going to speak to that. I've got 53 minutes left. I will get to that eventually, but that's the real reason: The government is looking for a win, and this is a good issue.

I'd like to go back to the minister. I agreed with his first statement—if I can find it here; I don't usually read my speeches. From the minister—not from the parliamentary assistant—from the minister: “If passed, the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act would give farmers who produce agricultural products other than crop and perennial plants access to the insurance they need to safeguard their investments.” That's actually not accurate, Speaker. What this legislation does—it's enabling legislation. What it does is, it changes words so that this could happen. It changes it from the Crop Insurance Act to the agricultural products act, I believe. That needs to happen in order to proceed, but that doesn't guarantee that other products will actually be covered. It's changing the wording. It's an important step, but a very small step. It's a step that could have been taken at any time in the last 11 years. I'm sure, having listened to the agriculture critic from the Conservative side, that it would have been easily passed at any time in the last 11 years.

It's worthy to note that Ontario is the last province to actually move in this direction. We sometimes hear that Ontario is a leader in—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, climate change. I'm going to get to that too, if I don't run out of time. “We're a leader in climate change,” the government says, “and we're a leader in this.” They're certainly, absolutely not a leader in agriculture production insurance. They're not a leader, they're a laggard, and that's important to note.

As much as we support this legislation—and one thing about this legislation: At least it doesn't have the usual fancy Liberal title, but I'm fairly positive that we're going to see big news releases that this is going to be a big change for farmers.

This legislation in itself is not going to be that change. There is a lot of work and consultation to be done. This is a step—an important first step, but it is merely a step.

I've got to go to page 2. I'm going to give a little 101 on how production insurance works from the governmental side—how we see it working—and how it works from a farmer's perspective. In this introduction, we're going to find out why farmers can't access this as easily as the minister and parliamentary assistant are telling us.

The cost of production insurance is shared by three partners: farmers, the provincial government and the federal government. It's shared 40% by farmers, 24% by the province and 36% by the feds, and there's the issue, because there's no money on the table. We waited 11 years for a word, but there's no money on the table, and that's really important, Speaker, because we know that there's no money in a lot of places. In fact, a lot of places are losing money.

1710

There is another program where farmers worked together with previous Ministers of Agriculture. It's a risk

management program. The production insurance that we're talking about today covers the actual production: how many tonnes of crop you get from a field, how many bushels of potatoes, how many—okay? Risk management covers the price you get. With risk management you can insure yourself to make sure that—because crop prices go up and down, so it can kind of even it out. Agricultural groups, with the provincial government, got together and they did a really good job. They created a risk management program bar none for the province of Ontario. It was bankable; it was predictable. That's what agriculture needed. Then this government capped it.

It was estimated that for this program to run efficiently and to make sure that the agricultural sector, the base production sector, which actually drives the agri-food industry in our province, which creates, I believe, \$30 billion or \$34 billion in economic activity and fuels 740,000 or 750,000 jobs—that's all based on the primary producer being solid, bankable and predictable so he can go to his bank and say, “I need to borrow X so I can plant my crops.”

That's what we had with the risk management program. Then this government capped it, so it's no longer bankable or predictable. Does it help? Yes. Are the commodity organizations going to chastise the government? No, because at the end of the day, it's the government. But, in all reality, Speaker, for that risk management program to work, the cap has to be raised close to what it was when the program was originally designed, which is between \$175 million and \$200 million.

Why that's important—before I lose my voice—and why that has something to do with production insurance is because for the production insurance to be moved over, or for the umbrella to cover more commodities, the money is going to have to come from somewhere to pay the province's portion. That hasn't been identified.

Until that's identified—because it could very well be that they could take another \$25 million or \$30 million out of risk management and put it into crop production insurance, and that really wouldn't help anyone. That would actually be a step backward. That is a very important thing to realize, because until we start talking about how the dollars are going to work, we are all just talking. That's very, very important.

We've waited 11 years, because I'm sure after that fed-prov meeting in 2003 the commodities that weren't covered were pretty excited, because Ontario was going to move in the right direction. They have waited 11 years for a word. Who knows how long we are going to have to wait until we actually have the regulations in place and the money. That's very important.

That's how it works from the government side. A farmer puts 40% in, the province puts 24% of the premium in and the feds put 36%. That goes into a pool, and if there is a loss, then the money comes out of the pool. The idea is that enough farmers participate so the pool is big enough and the risk is put over enough acres and over enough commodities that there's enough money in the pool to pay out those who have the misfortune of

having crop loss due to pests, due to weather, due to disease. That's how it's supposed to work.

For the large part, crop insurance is a good program. It has its hitches. All programs have their hitches. I hope that AgriCorp doesn't go to the same program that they're using for ODSP, because we'll have a lot more hitches.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: But there was a glitch a little bit ago.

Mr. John Vanthof: There were a few glitches, but we are not going to advance our argument by complaining about AgriCorp, because overall, AgriCorp is not the problem.

But there is a problem—I'm looking for a way to word this. I'm going to go back to the minister. Here was where I was very disappointed with the minister's statement, because he didn't focus on a lot of the things that are concerning farmers right now. I was surprised, because this government makes lots of noise about being focused on these issues. In his statement—I'm going to read the same statement again, a part of it: "As we all know, Ontario farmers grow and harvest a diverse range of crops and livestock. When unforeseen challenges such as pests, weather and disease strike, production insurance is there to provide coverage for losses and yield reductions."

Now, I was expecting him to spend quite a bit of time talking about pests—that's what the neonicotinoids issue is about—and weather, because we hear "climate change," and we are not climate change deniers. I know on my farm in northern Ontario we grow crops now that we couldn't grow 15 years ago, partly because of better genetics in the crops but partly because we're getting more heat units. But the weather is more unpredictable. We've heard the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change—I keep thinking he's only the Minister of Climate Change, but he is the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, which is kind of the same thing—speak in this House about increasing food prices and how it's going to be much more unpredictable. Obviously, the ministers don't talk, because that is going to impact crop insurance immensely.

I'll give you an example in my riding for this year and last year. The way crop insurance works, it works a lot like other kinds of insurance. So if you have a claim, your premium goes up. It's a pretty simple concept. The reason that is, and I understand it, is because sometimes farmers get a bit adventurous and they grow crops—you know, you grow corn where you know the corn is not going to yield too good. If you keep doing that, sure you'll collect crop insurance once, but your insurance will go up, and that stops you from doing that in the future.

I don't have a problem with that concept. Where that runs into trouble, though, is where, due to climate change, a whole region can't get its crops off. So that whole region, not due to any fault of the farmer, will have a hike in their crop insurance. If that happens again, they'll have another hike in the crop insurance and they won't be able to buy crop insurance because it will be too

high. Do you know what happens, Speaker, when you can't buy crop insurance? You can't get a loan to put in your crops, because for many, before the bankers—and I don't blame the bankers; I'm not anti-bank—will extend credit to a farmer to put in a crop, they want proof of crop insurance.

In my case, in Timiskaming-Cochrane, last year we had a pest that we've never had before. It is called the swede midge.

1720

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: What's it called?

Mr. John Vanthof: The swede midge.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Never heard of it.

Mr. John Vanthof: Neither had we. Timiskaming-Cochrane grows more canola—or grew more canola—than anywhere else in Ontario. We're the canola capital of Ontario. Why? Because our temperature's a little bit cooler, we had ideal conditions for canola, and quite frankly we could make pretty good money growing canola, so we all grew canola. Then comes the Swede midge.

Now, I'm not a scientist, but what the Swede midge does is it goes for the growing point of the plant. It kills the growing point, so the plant compensates by growing around it and starting over. But as a result, the plant never matures; it just keeps growing and growing and growing, and never produces a crop.

We sprayed and we sprayed, and we sprayed some more, but a lot of the fields were a total writeoff. That was not this summer, but last summer. The ones who were crop-insured got crop insurance, but their premiums went up because of that pest. Everybody with me now?

So this summer, a lot of people didn't grow canola, because the Swede midge is going to stick around for at least four years. A lot of people didn't grow canola, so we grew other crops: corn, soybeans.

This was the worst summer we've had, the old-timers tell me, since 1965—the coldest, the wettest—so a lot of our crops didn't get off. Now, for those farmers, that's hit number two. It's not their own problem; it's not their own cause. It wasn't bad management; it wasn't cutting back on fertilizer; it was purely weather, and if I'm listening to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, it could very well be climate change. But now those farmers are behind the eight ball because they'll have two claims in a row.

Even on a personal level—not my person, but I'll take an example. We have some fairly big farms in Timiskaming-Cochrane. Some of these farmers are cash croppers, elevator owners and custom farmers, so they'll come and custom-combine your grain. Like I said, usually we have snow in—around now it starts. We've had snow for a month. I remember the member from Haldimand-Norfolk was talking about snow beans; ours should be blizzard beans, because we haven't seen them for a while.

A good friend of mine; he's not alone, but he's a good friend of mine, his family. Some people here might even know Norm Koch and his kids, Rob and Chad. If you

ever drive through the TransCanada Highway and go through Earlton, you've got the town of Earlton on one side and Koch Farms on the other side, and they're both about the same size. It's a big farm—a family farm, but a big one.

Norm does a lot of custom-combining, and Norm is a good custom-combinder. Norm treats your crop like his own. This year, Norm didn't get a lot of his own crops off because he saved a lot of other people; he got their crops off. Now Norm is going to pay the price, and I think that's something that we have to look at. That wasn't mentioned at all: what climate change is going to do to crop insurance, what pests that we've never seen before are going to do to crop insurance and what they're going to do to the commodities that the government is proposing to cover.

Once again, we're totally in favour—no problem at all about supporting this bill—but we were extremely disappointed that the minister didn't take some time and actually recognize that if there are going to be huge changes in the climate in the future—in fact, I think the change is happening, because it's getting pretty dry in here. It used to be that the climate was only going to get hotter. I think it's going to be more erratic, because that's what we're experiencing. There's going to have to be some kind of mention of how that's going to impact agriculture and how that's going to impact individual areas.

I know in Timiskaming–Cochrane—

Mr. Chris Ballard: Where there are big alfalfa patches.

Mr. John Vanthof: Actually, they're fields in Timiskaming–Cochrane; not patches.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Is that what they're called?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. We don't have alfalfa patches. We have alfalfa fields.

All jokes aside—and I'm sure it's not the only place in the province, but I know my friends and farmers very well in Timiskaming–Cochrane. They're going to have a really tough winter. And it's going to get tougher next spring, because it's going to be hard for some of these people to get affordable crop insurance, not because of lack of management ability, but purely because of pests and weather conditions that they have never experienced before. It's a good example for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I was extremely disappointed that the Minister of Agriculture or his parliamentary assistant didn't even bother to mention that. It's really important.

I don't begrudge people who don't have an agricultural background for not totally understanding our sector. I don't totally understand other sectors all that well sometimes. But we do expect that ministers of the crown take the time to truly understand what's going on. I truly hope that, going forward, we actually have a working relationship and don't hear too many more cracks about how it took a member from Beaches–East York to bring this forward, because that won't go over well in the farm community. We all want to work together. This shouldn't

be a politically divisive issue, but it could very well become one.

Another issue I'd like to touch on is an issue that has been in the news a lot of late: the use of neonicotinoids. Again, I'm going to talk about this on two different levels: from the legislative level and from the dirt level, the people who actually plant.

Is there a problem with neonicotinoids? I don't think anyone is going to deny that. Can they affect pollinators? Yes. It is a pesticide. It's not rocket science to think that a pesticide could affect insects.

There was an issue with acute poisoning of bees, and that happened because of the dust coming off the treated seed, and the equipment that farmers use created more dust. The agricultural sector, the equipment sector, the seed companies and the chemical companies worked together to solve that problem. I think the acute poisoning problem from dust has been largely, if not eliminated—you can't honestly say that it has been eliminated, but it has been largely controlled. I think we can be safe to say that it has been largely controlled.

1730

The government has made an announcement on this issue. We are left with the case that there could yet be systemic problems with neonicotinoids, and from our party's position, we're not going to stand here and say, "Well, that can't be," because there very well could be systemic problems with neonicotinoids.

I'd like to back up a step to where these problems actually started. I'm going to go back even before neonicotinoids.

Over the years, agriculture has evolved and we've changed. I remember when I started farming, I mouldboard-plowed everything. Then that was a no-no because, "We need conservation tillage," so we went to conservation tillage. Then we went to no-till. No-till doesn't really work well in my area, so we went back to conservation tillage. So we made lots of changes.

When I started farming, there was lots of public research to help you. Over the years, the government has backed away from public research, and companies have taken up the slack. I don't blame them. I really don't. The federal government, I think, has been guiltier of trying to push science away and trying to push it to other people, but the province, as well, has backed off considerably on agricultural research. As a result, all the research that was done was private, by private companies who are out to make money, as I was when I farmed.

It's no surprise that farmers use a lot of chemical products for insurance. That's basically what neonicotinoids are. Some areas of farmland need them; some crops need them. Not all crops need them. But no one was actually paying for the research to see exactly where they were needed. That's one thing the government should be doing now. If you're serious that there are some places that don't need neonicotinoids, help us find ways to actually test accurately, to know when and where.

When that comes back to the crop insurance issue is, if you're going to restrict the use of something that is

used everywhere else, there are going to be yield impacts, and they're not going to be divided—the yield impacts aren't going to be the same all over. Some farms are going to be hit much harder than others. Some crops are going to be hit much harder than others. That's going to impact their crop insurance. So if your crop goes down because you can't use a chemical, then you'll get a payout for one year, maybe, but you won't the second year, and your premium is going to go way up.

Where that's even a bigger problem—fields are fairly big now. At least in my part of the world, they're fairly big, and they are not that uniform. So you could have three or four different types of soil on the same farm. One type of soil might be more prone to soil-borne insects than another type of soil. So to say that we can't use something because—how do you do that? If you have a 100-acre field and 20 acres in the middle of it needs protection from wireworm or whatever and the rest doesn't, how do you get around that?

I know how I got around it on my farm. I didn't have a big farm. I farmed about 500 acres. On my final 500-acre farm, I had 300 acres, of which I have about 250 left: beautiful soil, the kind of soil where after it rains, you could still go on there and not make mud. Just beautiful soil. But in the middle of that farm there were 40 acres of the clay like they made the pyramids from. It didn't matter what you did, that soil was always ready two weeks later, and if you touched that soil a day before it was ready, all you had was parking lot.

I was a smaller farmer. My bigger cash crop neighbours around me kind of laughed, but I had a 100-acre field that was split into two triangles and a straight stretch in the middle. I did that was because, as a smaller farmer, I could compensate for that. But bigger places can't. They can't come back and make those changes, and that's something we have to realize. Those are just a couple of examples.

The government has made this announcement of an aspirational goal—and in this case, I like the word “aspirational.” Most times I get a little bit leery from the word “aspirational,” but this time I hope they truly mean that, because the agricultural sector really wants to work. It's not in a farmer's best interest to destroy the environment. It's not in a farmer's best interest to destroy the soil. It's not in a farmer's best interest to hurt other species of animals. But a farmer needs the tools to operate his farm profitably, and if the government is going to take those tools away, then the government has to take steps so that the farmer can still compete with other areas, because otherwise the base of the agricultural sector on which this province depends won't be healthy and we won't be able to create all those jobs.

It gets even trickier when the province is making pronouncements on things that are actually a federal responsibility, so then some of our provincial counterparts, which farmers have to compete against, will have access to products that we won't have access to. In effect, you're creating an island, and when you create an island—I have a cottage on a lake and I have friends who have a cottage on that lake, but they're on an island.

Everything is harder to get to the island. When you create an agricultural island, it becomes more difficult. That's the government's decision to make, but the government has to realize the ramifications of creating that island. You have to step up to the plate if you're going to do that, and crop insurance is one place where that will rear its head.

If we can look ahead on the neonicotinoid file, we need to spend a lot of research and time—public research—to find ways where we can test where we need it and where we don't. It's really important. We can't just say, “We have to use ‘this much less’,” and that's it.

I'll give the government credit; there is no aspirational target on canola because canola really needs it. I grew canola for a long time and before neonicotinoids we used organophosphates to kill the bugs, and organophosphates were way more dangerous. They were dangerous to use.

That's something else that you have to realize: If you don't look at the whole picture, you can ban one thing but you have to make sure that you know what's going to replace it, because some of these crops aren't going to grow without those tools. You have to look at the whole picture and I really hope that on this issue the government takes the time to actually listen to farmers and work with farmers for the long term, and to their credit, on the acute problem we have with neonicotinoids, I think the government recognizes the work that the farmers have done, and I hope that they will continue to work with agriculture. But they're going to have to realize that to really come up with viable tools so we can produce using fewer pesticides, we're going to need research dollars and we're going to need public research. I don't see why anybody is surprised, when you leave all the research to the people who make the chemicals—if you expect them to do the research—that you don't end up using more chemicals. That's not rocket science.

1740

Something else: A lot of people bunch the neonicotinoid problem with genetically modified, GMOs, and you can have your own views on GMOs, but actually, because of GMOs, we use a lot less pesticide than we did 20 years ago. The people who want to ban GMOs and ban neonicotinoids—you can have your own views. I perfectly respect people who want to buy organic. I'm not a big believer. I don't, but if people want to buy organic, it's perfectly respected.

There's a reason that organic should be more expensive, because by and large, you don't get the yields from organic that you do from—I don't know what you would call it. The word isn't “commercial.” What's the word? When you're not organic, what are you?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Conventional?

Mr. John Vanthof: Conventional; that's the word I was looking for.

Organic crops are harder to grow. Usually, with organic field crops, you use a lot more fuel, so for the people who want us to use less fuel—when I was a kid, before—what's the chemical? Roundup. I farmed before there was Roundup, and Roundup kills a lot of things.

Roundup is actually a very safe product. It's safer than table salt; table salt is more poisonous than Roundup.

Before there was Roundup, our worst weed in my part of the world was quackgrass. Quackgrass is a killer weed. It's a grass, it's a perennial, so it's got miles and miles of roots, and if there's quackgrass, nothing else grows. Before Roundup, there were all kinds of things we tried, but what my dad did for quackgrass is we'd pick whatever field had the worst quackgrass and we would summer fallow. Summer fallowing is basically you cultivate that field, so you keep it black all summer.

That was my job. I was a little kid, and I was cultivating that field. So you don't grow a crop on that field; you just keep it black all summer. You don't see that anymore, and that's not really that good for the environment, because you use a lot of diesel fuel. Then, while I was cultivating, you'd have to pull out the cultivator and pull all those quackgrass roots off the cultivator, and you'd have to do this every week, the whole summer. We used all kinds of diesel fuel, and we didn't really kill the quackgrass either. We just kind of set it back.

Then Roundup came, and Roundup was a wonder product, but it also has a problem. I can remember when Roundup was first commercialized, when we first started using Roundup—it was expensive back then; I think it was \$40 a litre when I started using it. Everybody told us that nothing is ever going to be resistant to Roundup. You know what, Speaker? There are now lots of weeds that are resistant to Roundup. So you have to be careful how you use a product. I think that's the lesson for neonicotinoids too. You have to be careful how you use a product because if you use it too much, eventually the things you were going to try to control will develop resistance. I'm not a scientist, but I farmed for a long time, and Roundup is my example. When I started, Roundup wasn't going to have any resistance, and now there are lots of things resistant to Roundup.

Do we need to do things about neonicotinoids? Yes. Is the government's announcement the answer? No, not by itself. What we've called for—and I think the government is a bit late on this. You need a licence to spray in this province. You have a commercial licence. I have a farmer's licence to spray in this province, and commercial applicators have a higher level of licence. We could have done this last year: that you need that sprayer licence to be able to handle neonicotinoids. It would have made a big difference, and it would have increased people's confidence, because not just anybody can use it. It's a pesticide, so you should be licensed. Most farmers are licensed; not all. That would have been an easy step that we could have done already. Would it have been a big headline? No. But it would have been a step—just like nutrient management plans. They were a huge step.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Pest management training courses.

Mr. John Vanthof: Pest management training courses—that's how you get your licence.

Those are things we have to do. Those are programs that are in place.

One thing we haven't done—and this government has done a very poor job at it; and not just this government, but even agriculture itself—is telling people what actually happens with agriculture in this province, how strictly it's regulated. That's another problem.

They haven't announced a ban on neonicotinoids—but it very well could be.

Once you create the island, you're still having people come on and off the island with boats. So if the issue is that you don't want to have products that have neonicotinoids, you're going to have to do a lot more than ban neonicotinoids in your own little part of the world.

I'll give you an example, Speaker. I'm a dairy farmer so I like talking about it. I was a dairy farmer.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I always will be. When the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane get sick of me, somebody will probably hire me to milk cows.

We're going to talk about another issue that was a huge issue about a decade ago, and it was something like neonicotinoids: rBST. It's called bovine somatotropin. It's something that you can inject into a dairy cow and you'll get more milk.

Mr. Bob Delaney: John, you're the cream of the crop.

Mr. John Vanthof: I won't respond.

In America, this was all the rage. It comes from Monsanto. It's easier to milk cows when you have BST. You can give them a needle. It's a complicated story, but you don't have to breed them as often, and you can give them a needle and get a lot more milk. But if you think about it, injecting steroids, basically, into cows—is that good for your milk? Not really. Well, you know what? We never used it in Canada, because we have a unique system to supply milk in Canada—supply management—and Canadian farmers never wanted it. Why? Because they didn't think that people would accept it. But we didn't need it because our milk price was protected. We got a fair price for our milk, so there was no desire, because we didn't really have to compete with milk coming in from other places. As a result, consumers benefited. They benefited not only from a stable supply of milk, but they benefited because they never had to deal with BST. Now they use a lot less BST in the States, too, because people just didn't like it. So that's how, if the government does something, you can control what's used and not used.

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But with neonics it's different, because the farmers who don't have access still have to compete with farmers in Quebec, farmers in Manitoba, farmers in Michigan. They are going to be at risk. So the government has got to recognize that and look for ways that we can see where we need it and where we don't, and look for ways it's going to impact things like crop insurance. Because for certain farmers, if they don't have the access and if we put rules in place that actually—because we have a tendency to do that. We have a tendency—the government has a tendency—to put rules in place that sound really good here but don't work on the ground.

If we're going to put stricter controls on neonics, which we agree with, we have to make sure that the programs are in place on the ground to make sure that it can be accurately identified where neonics can be used and can't, and that in places where neonics can be used, the farmers actually have access. Because when it's time to plant and you're going through six months of regulatory process to get the ability to use them—you can't plant in October. That's a big issue.

So can we regulate? Should we regulate neonics? Should we have stronger regulation? Yes. But those regulations have to make sense from the ground.

In closing, Speaker—it's going to be a six-minute-and-19-second closing.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to have to check my notes to see what I missed—neonicotinoids, next steps.

In closing, I'd like to say, once again, we are in favour of this bill. Absolutely. Should this bill be travelled? Quite frankly, I'm not sure, because this bill is just a change of a few words. I don't think I could find a farmer in Ontario who is opposed to this bill. Oh, I could find a couple; farmers are a contrary bunch. So I could find a couple who would be opposed to this bill, but by and large the farm community is going to be in favour of this bill.

I have spoken to many people in the farm community. Actually, I got a technical briefing from the ministry, and as I was walking out in the hall, Matt Bowman—is Matt president of the Cattlemen's yet?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: No, not yet.

Mr. John Vanthof: He should be. He's on his way. He's in my riding, and he's an excellent farmer. He's a big representative of the Ontario cattlemen.

I met him in the hall just outside the Legislature on that day. He said, "John." I said, "Matt, what are you doing here? I just got a technical briefing about the new production insurance." He said, "Well, it's about time." And I agree with him. It's about time.

I've talked to the pork producers, Amy Cronin—I believe she's the chair of the pork producers. Great lady.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yeah, and she's very in favour and very capable of representing her industry. So I think there's pretty well universal acceptance for this bill.

Where we're going to have to be careful, and where this bill is going to need extreme scrutiny, is when we actually get to the working parts and where the money is going to come from, how the programs are going to be developed. That's going to be crucial, because we all know what happens when we don't take the time to develop the programs right.

One of the things, hopefully, that this bill will change is that we won't need as many ad hoc programs, because ad hoc programs can be a disaster. I'm sure we have all been contacted by the—I can't remember the name of their organization, but they're young pork producers who

didn't qualify for the program when there was the disaster program for pork. They're very diligent people; I commend them. They're right—they were starting their careers and they got zippo, and people who were ending their careers got a bunch of money. That's what happens when you have an ad hoc program, because it's put together quickly. Because the government is trying to react to a crisis, you make mistakes. Unfortunately, that happened eight years ago, so those mistakes will likely never be remedied. Hopefully this program will make less need for ad hoc programs.

It's going to be very important how it's put together because if you look at the Risk Management Program that was developed by the pork producers and the beef producers, that then was capped by this government. We very well might still have the need for ad hoc programs because if crop prices crash, as they've done, and if that stays like that, one sector could very well drain that program and render it basically useless—not useless; useless isn't the right word. It could render it—basically, it'll drain the tank and it won't get the job done and you still might need an ad hoc program.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Ineffective.

Mr. John Vanthof: Ineffective; thank you.

That's something we really have to worry about.

So we need to do a lot of consultation with producers on this. I think we need to do much more consultation with producers on neonics than what's being proposed—much more—because, believe me, farmers across the province want to solve this problem. But they need to understand, they need to have confidence that the government actually wants to work with them, and that's going to take more than just a couple of sessions; it's going to take more than that. It's going to take a commitment from the government to actually fund the research so we know, in a timely manner, where we do and where we don't need neonics.

In my final minute, I'd like to reiterate that for any type of crop insurance to be effective in the future, especially with this government—when the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change keeps talking about the huge impacts that's going to have for agriculture. Well, then, the crop production insurance program in this province has to take that into account, because otherwise, producers are going to bear the brunt and then producers are going to fail. It's happening right now in Timiskaming-Cochrane. There has to be changes made to the crop production insurance program this winter in Timiskaming-Cochrane or there will be farmers, through no fault of their own, who will not be able to afford the crop insurance that they need to get operating capital to put in their crops.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday, December 8, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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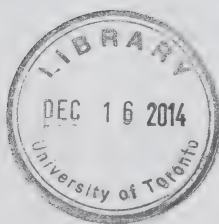
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Monday 8 December 2014

Lundi 8 décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 décembre 2014

The House met at 1030.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to welcome Studio Y, which is Ontario's Youth Social Impact and Leadership Academy. Folks from there are seated in the east members' gallery and include: Andrew Do, Matthew Blackshaw, Kacper Niburski, Safiah Chowdhury, Irfan Sharif, Sabrina Tang, Ryan Collins-Swartz and Keaton Evans. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to welcome my former Scarborough–Agincourt student, who is currently a fourth-year student at Ryerson University, Sachil Patel, who is witnessing today's proceedings.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to acknowledge and welcome Equal Voice to Queen's Park. Equal Voice Toronto is hosting their annual Queen's Park reception today from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., in rooms 228 and 230. I hope all the members will participate.

This year's theme is "More Than Ever" to celebrate that in June 2014, more women than ever were elected to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to welcome today Fanshawe College. They're here as well for a reception at 11:30, and I extend an invitation to all my colleagues to join them.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Monsieur le Président, j'ai le plaisir d'accueillir—I have the pleasure of welcoming the students from Briarcrest Junior School, grade 5, whom I had the pleasure of meeting with this morning. It's the French class visiting today, Mr. Speaker, so I welcome them.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Steve Lichty, the CEO of Tri-County Mennonite Homes in New Hamburg, and his wife Judy Rocco.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, my EA, Margo Duncan, is retiring on Thursday, and she has her family and close friends here today to help her celebrate. I want to introduce her daughter, son-in-law and grandsons: Xana, Derek, Ciarán, Brayden, Braonán and Declan McCormick; her sister and brother-in-law, Pat and Bill Ostermeier; her aunt—and our Sergeant-at-Arms's aunt's best friend—Bella Spencer; and lifelong friends Linda Zepotoczny and Catherine Dunne.

I wish Margo all the best in her retirement and thank her for her hard work, training, brutal honesty and friend-

ship over these past seven years. I'm also putting her in for the Order of Canada, because she was with me for seven years.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Please join me in welcoming page captain Johann Muthukumaraswamy; his mother, Rachael Rajaratnam; his brother, Dominic Muthukumaraswamy; and his grandmother, Ariam Rajaratnam. They will be sitting in the gallery. Please join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a long-time friend, a champion of the Portuguese-Canadian community, the owner and operator of Merit Metal Industries, Virgilio Pires. Welcome to Queen's Park. It's great to have you here.

Hon. David Oraziotti: I want to introduce two constituents from Sault Ste. Marie, John and Ida Bruno, who are joining us here today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted that we are joined today by representatives of Fanshawe College in London: Peter Devlin and Anne Marie DeCicco-Best and their team. Welcome. You're all invited to a reception at noon for Fanshawe College.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' east gallery today, I'd like to introduce Lyle Vancleef, who is the former federal member of Parliament for Prince Edward–Hastings and was the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food in the Chrétien government; and Doug Moses, who is his assistant and with us today. Let's welcome Lyle and Doug.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I want to take the privilege to introduce, on behalf of our colleague MPP Jack MacLaren, page Kelsey Clark; her mother, Cheryl Clark; and her grandmother, Patty Clark. They are in the members' gallery, so let's welcome them.

It's time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY RATES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of the—no, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My goodness, promotions all around—it must be Christmas.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You had me surprised there.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Energy. As we get

closer to winter and temperatures drop, the consequences of your irresponsible hydro policies become more apparent and dire. All across Ontario, people have to face the hard choice between paying their hydro bills or going without other essentials. This is because they're paying 14 cents a kilowatt hour plus the debt retirement charge, HST and delivery charges. When you entered office, ratepayers were paying a competitive 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour.

If you don't change your course, Ontarians who are struggling to pay their hydro bills today will soon be forced out of their homes and left in most desperate conditions. Minister, will you finally address the reality of the failure of your energy policies and stop these unaffordable increases?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: For the last 10 years, this party and this government have been making tremendous efforts to create affordability, reliability and clean energy in the province of Ontario. When we took over government 10 years ago, there was a deficit of electricity; they were expanding dirty coal, to the point where it was 25%; and they had double-digit increases in the rates when they tried to privatize the electricity system.

We've invested tremendously in the energy sector to make it reliable, to make it affordable and to make it clean. I'm happy, in the supplementaries, to deal with the specifics.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, you know that the primary reason for skyrocketing hydro bills is because of your Green Energy Act and the expensive contracts that you signed under it for unreliable, intermittent energy.

On November 24, wind turbines were cranking out a ton of expensive power we didn't need. We had to sell that power at a loss. We sold it to Michigan, New York and Quebec at a loss of \$10 million. That's \$10 million for a single day. Steve Austin was the Six Million Dollar Man; you're the \$10-million-a-day man.

1040

How do you explain to the small businesses or the seniors struggling with their backs up against the wall how we can blow \$10 million a day? It's right on their hydro bills. How do we explain that to them?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I know that the critic for the Conservatives understands the electricity system a little more than he's letting on. He's feigning ignorance in terms of the electricity system. He knows that we have a surplus, when they left us with a deficit of electricity. That surplus is being used to help the ratepayer and to reduce rates. We're doing that in a number of ways.

One of the ways we're doing it is by creating the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program, which represents about a 50% reduction in electricity rates for new companies coming into Ontario and for those that are expanding. We are taking significant steps.

He also knows that on the sale and the trade of electricity we are saving costs to the taxpayer by exporting our electricity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, critics of your government policies have said time and time again, as new, intermittent, expensive, unreliable energy comes on line, we will have to sell more power at a loss to our competitors at times when we don't need it.

When our electrical system is flooded with wind power, ratepayers have to pay Bruce Nuclear to release steam from their plants, reducing the output from their plants. When we're flooded with wind power, you have to let gas plants stand idle.

Ratepayers have to foot all of the bills for that. They pay for your mistakes. You know that as peak and off-peak hydro rates rise, Ontario ratepayers get hit harder and harder and harder.

Minister, what are you prepared to do to ensure that Ontario has no more \$10-million days so you can stop being the \$10-million man?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member knows that renewable energy consists of about 8% of our total energy supply. That has a marginal increase in prices. To attribute it to renewable energy is very disingenuous, to borrow a phrase from the member from eastern Ontario.

But I would refer the member to an article in the New York Times about four or five days ago, where they spoke about a study by Lazard investment firm, which is a very credible, large investment firm, where they have itemized across North America how energy prices are coming down for renewable.

In US states, the renewables are now parity at grid. In other words, wind and solar are not—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Answer.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —anywhere else. The current procurement process we're going through—I met with the industry about five or six days ago. They are now almost approaching parity at grid.

Moving forward, it will be as cheap as gas, and it will be cleaner than gas. That's because we have—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. New question?

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, it has been almost a year since the ice storm and municipalities are still waiting for emergency assistance. It took you nine months to write an application so municipalities could apply for the ice-storm funding. It took another two months to give them training on the applications. Then, two weeks later, according to the Toronto Star, you are blaming municipalities for not having their applications in. Who is really at fault here, Minister: the municipalities or you?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Let me take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to say I was amongst a large number of Ontarians who experienced the ice storm. Our power in our place was out, I think, for six days.

I have nothing but admiration and respect for municipalities and the first responders who responded so well to the emergency that befell large parts of Ontario. In that regard, our government took the unprecedented step of supplying up to \$190 million based on municipalities requiring money over and above their budget and also related to health and safety concerns directly related to the ice storm.

Municipalities are processing the applications. We're helping them in every way we can. I'm pleased to say that things are coming along quite well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, if you can't get the smallest of the claims out, how long is it going to take you to process these claims that are thousands of times higher?

According to the press, the claim from Toronto is going to be 2,000 times higher than the claim that's already in your office waiting for approval. Have you approved that claim yet? Has any of that money gone out to the municipalities yet? We were told last week that, in fact, you had one application in. Have they actually got their money yet, Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I appreciate that question from my honourable opponent, who speaks quite frequently about government accountability. I know that in a similar situation when they were in government, they shovelled money out the door, and when they applied to the feds to get the money back, the feds said no. We're not about to replicate that situation.

Here's what your former leader John Tory, the current mayor of the largest municipality in Ontario, said: "The applications are just about complete. They (staff) are having no trouble putting them together, and they are going to be submitted on time. The deadline is what it is, and I am told that the applications will be in on time and that they are not having any trouble with them."

So when the largest municipality and one of the smaller ones, Mapleton, can complete them, we're well on track.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, it's clear that someone has messed up. It's a year after the ice storm, and only \$23,000 of the \$190 million in emergency assistance, according to you, has actually gone out, which would be to that small municipality.

Now that you've found out that the program is so bad that some municipalities are considering giving up on their applications, are you going to penalize the Alberta company you hired for almost \$3 million to help you deliver this program? Are you going to penalize them for this delay, or are you, in fact, going to accept that they are doing their job, but you're not?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, we're doing the job, Mr. Speaker. There are accountability provisions in place. Much of that is governed by the federal process. By the way, we learned just last Friday that, because of the pro-

visions we put in place around accountability, the feds are going to actually partner with Ontario in terms of assisting. So I think that's good news.

We'll continue to work with municipalities. They asked for some additional time and some additional help, and guess what? We extended the deadlines because some of them had not even calculated the full cost by the end of August. We have extended the deadline, and we provided some assistance to them. We are on track for December 31, and I'm pleased to say that I think very soon, things will work out very well.

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. In hundreds of schools and clinics across this province, public health units provide basic teeth cleaning and checkups to low-income children, but New Democrats found out that Liberals are quietly cutting preventative dental care for kids by cutting this service from the Ontario Public Health Standards. Toronto's medical officer of health says that 80% of children who received oral health care are going to lose it.

The Premier has said she is "not going to cut health care." Can she explain why she is, in fact, doing just that and cutting dental care for thousands and thousands of vulnerable children across this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's the reality of what we're doing: We are in the process of combining six different programs. If you look at the programs that were in place, in fact, the money that was allocated to these programs was not all being spent. It wasn't being used in the way that it was intended to be used. In 2013-14, the funding for the Healthy Smiles Ontario program was \$30 million, and as of April 1, 2014, 70,000 more children from low-income families can now access dental services. So the changes that we are making are designed to help more kids whose families cannot afford dental services to get those dental services.

1050

We are combining six programs. It is a change. I know that the leader of the third party is not keen on change of any kind, but this change is going to mean that more kids from low-income families will get dental services.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That is simply not the case, and this Premier knows it. She and her minister have insisted all along that health care is not being cut, while we've watched the Liberals cut health care time and time again. But the Liberals are secretly cutting dental care for the most vulnerable children; 15,000 children in Toronto will lose dental care. That's a cut. News to Premier: That's a cut, 15,000 children.

According to Northwestern Health Unit, of the 4,000 children who received preventative dental care services last year, 98% of them are going to lose that service. That is a cut. Of those 4,000 kids who received care last year, only 80 kids—of 4,000, only 80 kids are going to be getting that service.

New Democrats believe that children should have healthy smiles, not rotting teeth. The Liberals used to believe that at one time, too. Will the Premier stop these cuts and make sure these kids get their services?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reason that we are making the changes that we are, the reason that we're taking six programs where kids were not accessing the services that they needed and combining those into one program, is because we believe that more kids from low-income families should have access to dental services. So as of April 1, 2014, 70,000 more children from low-income families have access to dental services.

If there is a particular issue in a particular program in a particular municipality, I know that the Minister of Health would like to know about that, but overall, the funding has not changed, the programs have been consolidated and more children are receiving dental care. More children from low-income families are getting that dental care that they need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier can drink her own bathwater all she wants, but the Toronto Board of Health has asked the Liberals to stop these cuts. The Northwestern Health Unit has asked the Liberals to stop these cuts. The Association of Local Public Health Agencies has asked the Liberals to stop these cuts. The Premier is the only one who is saying that there are no cuts to kids. Everybody else is admitting that, in fact, low-income kids are going to have their services cut. This Premier should admit to the people of Ontario exactly what she's doing.

So now I ask her the question: Will she actually do the right thing and stop these unprecedented preventative health care cuts, dental care cuts, from being cut from the people, from the lowest income, from the most vulnerable children in our province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The \$30 million that is in the Healthy Smiles program is there. It has not been cut. That money is available. What we have done is we have integrated six programs. If, as I said, there is a specific case where there has been a change that has had an unintended consequence, we would want to know about that and we would want to know the specifics. But 70,000 more kids from low-income families are receiving dental care because of the changes that we are making. I think that that is a good thing. We are working so that more children will have that dental care, and that will make them healthier. That is the full and the primary reason that we are making these changes: so that more kids will have access to dental care.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. As the session closes this week, the cynicism and arrogance of this Liberal government continues to grow. We just saw it again with that Premier's answer. The government insists people aren't being hurt by health

care cuts, but cutting nurses and cutting access to home care actually hurts people. Now it's cutting dental care for low-income children. Will the Premier admit that her government is cutting health care and that, in fact, people and children are being hurt?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are working very hard on this side of the House to make changes that are necessary to transform the health care system so that people get the service that they need. Whether it's low-income kids who can't access dental care or whether it is people in their homes who need service, we are increasing funding to make sure that that happens.

The reality is that there is change needed. There's change needed, whether it's the integration of the six dental care programs or whether it's accessing more service for people in the community. Those are changes that are necessary. We are making those changes, Mr. Speaker, and we are increasing funding in health care, not reducing it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Ontario want their government to make changes that make their lives better, not make their lives worse.

It's not just cuts to health care. This government insisted that it was being open and transparent, but the Liberals keep a so-called transparency report on the auto insurance industry hidden, and the Liberals are still protecting Liberal insiders in the \$1.1-billion gas plants scandal.

How long can this Premier continue to insist that she is being open and transparent when the evidence shows the contrary, time and time again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just picking up the thread from that first question, Mr. Speaker: The reality is that the report to which the leader of the third party refers is a report that will be made available. We have said that all along.

We have been very clear about the challenges in front of us, and we've been very clear that we do need to make changes. When there are six programs that are in place to allow kids to have access to dental care, if the resources aren't being spent, if the money is not being spent on that, and the kids who most need the dental care are not getting that dental care, then I think a change is needed. That's why we've integrated the six programs.

I understand that the leader of the third party thinks it is responsible to just say, "Don't change anything. Just leave everything the way it is." That's not what we believe, Mr. Speaker. If there's a problem, we think we should solve it. More kids needing dental care: We think we should solve that. That's what we're doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I know that the Premier ignored the transparency and accountability piece of my question. Perhaps when she meets with Christy Clark this afternoon, a Liberal Premier to another Liberal Premier, she can encourage Ms. Clark to have Peter Faist and

Laura Miller come to Ontario to talk about their roles in the gas plants scandal.

Since the Legislature was recalled in the fall, we've seen cuts to health care for kids, and now dental care. We've seen child care spaces closed. We've seen insiders protected. We've seen cuts to schools. We've seen reports hidden from the public. We've seen an increase in the privatization of everything from hydro to health care.

Is this the kind of cynicism and arrogance that we can expect from this Liberal government for the next three and a half years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just because that is the narrative written down on the page that the leader of the third party has in front of her does not mean that that's what's happening.

The reality is that we are implementing the plan and the agenda that we ran on. We said we were going to make sure that we continued to deliver health care to people as they need it, in their homes, where they need it. We said we were going to tackle issues of poverty and make sure that more low-income kids have access to dental care. That's part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

We said we were going to be open about the work that we were doing. That's why all of our mandate letters, both the ministers' and the parliamentary assistants' mandates letters, are available for everyone to know the work that is being done in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that as the leader of the third party sees the things that are happening, the changes that we are making that are benefitting people, she will support us in those changes.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Minister, in 94 of the last 95 months, Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average. In particular, my riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London has seen its unemployment numbers continually rise since April. This past month, its unemployment rate rose from 7.5% to 7.8%.

You, Minister, have implemented a number of measures over the past three years, but obviously your plan is not working, as unemployment numbers continue to escalate. My riding has lost over 6,000 manufacturing jobs under your government and unemployment numbers continue to increase.

Obviously, your ideas are not working. Minister, what is plan B for jobs in my riding?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Yes, indeed, the job numbers on Friday weren't what we were hoping for, and I had an opportunity to speak to that on Friday.

1100

The fact of the matter is, these numbers fluctuate from month to month. If you look at September numbers, Mr. Speaker, they were up 24,000. Not a peep from the opposition when our business community was creating 24,000 net jobs. When you look at October, we're up 37,000 net new jobs. Not a peep from the member opposite when we're up 37,000 new jobs.

This past month, yes, the numbers did go down. But since September, we're still up 30,000 net new jobs in this province. That's good news, and still, not a positive peep from the member opposite on that news.

When our Premier came back from China—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Answer.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll talk about that in the supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, obviously you didn't listen to my question. The unemployment rate has been going up since April. It wasn't fluctuating; it was a continual, steady trend upward. Maybe if you'd listened to the question I'd get a good answer.

Minister, the strategies you have initiated over the last three years have only transformed into election-buying and job-retention strategies as opposed to job creation funds. Your policies are failing my constituents. You've had three months in this Legislature, Minister, to bring changes that would foster a business environment for investment and job growth. You again have failed to do so. Your current jobs program is that of high energy costs, job-stifling regulation such as the College of Trades, mandatory WSIB for private contractors, and mountains of red tape, all of which is detrimental to job growth for medium, small and large businesses.

Minister, when will this government stop relying on old strategies that aren't working and implement policies to deal with the job losses in my riding?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Again, in the month of October, manufacturing jobs were up 32,900 in the province of Ontario. Last month—overall, not the best month for Ontario—manufacturing jobs were still up 11,600 net new jobs. Again, not a peep from the member of the opposition on any of that positive information. In fact, London has gained over 3,800 net new jobs in the last year. Again, the member ignores that good-news information in his community.

There are parts of this province that are struggling more than most. That's why we set up the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. Shamefully, that member voted against that fund. Some \$2.9 million have been invested in the London area, leveraging nearly \$30 million in private sector investment in London and creating jobs in that community. We're creating jobs right across the province.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. During the holiday season, many charities give out gift cards to help clients afford food and gifts for their families. Last week, we uncovered the outrageous practice that Money Mart was using to take advantage of the most vulnerable people in Ontario by paying out 50 cents on the dollar for gift cards.

While we are encouraged, in fact, that Money Mart has announced they're suspending this program, how will the government—how will the minister—ensure that

Money Mart doesn't resume this shameful practice once the spotlight is turned off?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Obviously, this practice, we believe, is impacting vulnerable consumers in Ontario, and that's why we sent enforcement folks from our ministry to Hamilton to investigate. We reached out to Money Mart immediately on hearing this information, and the program is now suspended, as the member has indicated. I'm certainly pleased with that.

We have a strong record in our government of consumer protection and of increasing and enhancing consumer protection measures for Ontarians. We will continue to review this matter and ensure that regulations are put in place. We have proposed legislation coming in the spring following a very exhaustive consultation that took place this past spring prior to the election. We would likely have more progress on that legislation had an election not been called, but we have some very good recommendations coming forward to enhance legislation to protect consumers on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The minister has had 11 years—this government has had 11 years—to address this problem and they have not addressed this problem. Minister, it's not just Money Mart that has this predatory practice. As soon as we brought this issue to your attention, we learned that other payday loan companies are offering a similar program. For example, Cash Corner is offering a very similar gift card program to vulnerable Ontarians in the Niagara region. New Democrats have long called for sweeping and wholesale reform to put the brakes on this predatory industry, and this government has done nothing.

Will this government follow the example set by other provinces and finally commit to wholesale reform to properly regulate this predatory industry?

Hon. David Orazietti: The member knows that the comments he's making are not completely accurate, because these are practices that evolve with these organizations as they continue to look for new ways to increase their financial betterment at the expense, often, of vulnerable consumers. We need to make sure—and we need to be vigilant—that we are continuing to move forward with regulations and legislation that help to protect consumers in the province of Ontario.

As soon as we became aware of this issue, we acted. This process and this activity is now stopped in the province of Ontario. We have changes coming. I am not aware of any jurisdiction in North America where there is legislation or regulations that regulate the resale of gift cards in North America. However, we obviously want to take all steps that we can to protect consumers.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, in my riding of Kitchener Centre, I'm hearing from people who are having very much

trouble saving for their retirement. There are many studies that do show that Ontarians simply are not saving enough for their retirement years.

Our government committed to improving the retirement income system in the 2013 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review. Just to recap this three-part strategy, it focuses on people without workplace pension plans, people with self-directed retirement savings and people with defined benefit plans.

Minister, I understand that you are planning on introducing PRPP legislation this afternoon that is going to bolster our retirement pension strategy. Can you please further tell this House why it is that we need this plan?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member for Kitchener Centre for her question.

Less than 35% of workers in Ontario have a workplace pension plan. Coverage for workers in the private sector is even lower, with only 28% having membership in a benefit plan.

These numbers are alarming, and that's why this afternoon I plan on introducing PRPP legislation. I'm proud that this government is taking a balanced strategy to ensure Ontarians are better able to enjoy their retirement years.

The PRPP will be part of our plan for a comprehensive retirement strategy for their security. If passed, PRPP will allow Ontarians working for small to medium-sized businesses, as well as self-employed, to benefit from voluntary retirement savings tools at lower administration costs.

Building a strong retirement savings system so Ontarians can have a secure retirement future is a key pillar in our four-part plan to build Ontario up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you to the minister for his response. It's very encouraging to hear that our government is committed to ensuring a strong and secure retirement income system to help people when they reach their retirement years.

We know that in the 2014 budget our government committed to introducing PRPP legislation this fall. But hasn't the federal government already introduced its own PRPP bill? They did this back in 2012.

Minister, can you please tell us how the legislation that you plan on introducing this afternoon is going to compare with the federal legislation when passed?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, thank you to the member for Kitchener Centre for the supplementary question.

The member from Kitchener Centre is correct. PRPPs were first introduced by the federal government in December 2012 to provide individuals under federal jurisdictions with a new retirement savings tool. Legislation must now be passed by each province before PRPPs can be made available to the individuals employed in provincially regulated sectors and self-employed individuals.

Our government committed in the 2014 budget to introduce a legislative framework for PRPPs. It is an important part of our government's three-pronged strategy

to enhance retirement savings in Ontario. If passed, our province will join British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia in providing this voluntary retirement savings tool to ensure that people across this province can retire with dignity and security.

1110

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. In just the first month of this government's winter road-clearing plan for 2014-15, we see that while we may have a new minister, he's working off the former minister's tired old script. He's employing the same old failed strategy of fining the heck out of contractors for traffic tie-ups and then walking away thinking the problem is fixed.

Will the minister tell us how effective the over \$3.2 million in fines handed to contractors last year have been in preventing road closures this year?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for that question. I believe that member knows, because I've said it in many times in this House and outside of this House, that road and highway safety is, in fact, one of my most important responsibilities when you look at the mandate that I received from the Premier to deliver as Minister of Transportation.

It's one of the reasons that, not that many weeks ago, we announced that we would be releasing more equipment in southern Ontario—50 new pieces of equipment, specifically—to join with the 55 new pieces of equipment that were deployed last February in northern Ontario. It's why we have new inspectors out on the ground. It's why we've moved swiftly when there had been incidents that have occurred so far this winter.

We will continue to work very closely with our area maintenance contractors. We'll continue to work closely with communities right across the province and, of course, we encourage drivers to drive according to the conditions of the road and to work with us as partners, as they always do, to ensure that our roads remain amongst the safest in North America.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: It's always the drivers' fault—always.

Speaker, just two weeks ago the minister announced new fines for the southern Ontario contractor for the QEW mess in late November. Then last week, another review, and surely fines to follow, for a Highway 17 closure in northern Ontario due to snow. This broken merry-go-round routine of winter road closure, government review and contractor fines may be filling government coffers, but it has done nothing to improve what's becoming a road-clearing crisis. Yet we're still two weeks, in fact, from winter officially.

Instead of just fining our winter maintenance partners, will the minister commit today to exercise his responsi-

bility and work with the contractors to address problems ahead of time so that we can prevent them from occurring in the first place?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member again for that follow-up question. I would say that since the end of last winter, right through to the beginning of this winter, the Ministry of Transportation has worked very closely with our area maintenance contractors. By and large, throughout this winter maintenance season so far, our contractors have performed well.

Of course, there have been circumstances, and the member has referenced a couple of them, where it is possible—and, in one case, likely—that a contractor was out of compliance with contractual obligations. That's why the Ministry of Transportation, as per the contract, filed notices of non-compliance.

We continue to work closely with our partners: the contractors themselves. We encourage drivers, as I've said before, to drive according to the conditions of the road. And we, as the ministry, will continue to enforce the contracts to ensure that our partners are actually in compliance.

PAPER MILL

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Pardon my voice. Last Friday, residents of Iroquois Falls got a huge lump of coal for Christmas as Resolute Forest Products announced that they were closing the paper mill. The paper mill is the pillar employer in that community—not just in that community, but in that whole region. Because the forest industry is highly integrated, this is going to impact other mills. It's going to impact suppliers. It's going to impact right down to the grocery store. It's going to be huge. The last shift is just before Christmas.

A bigger issue: It was also announced that the heat for the mill will be shut off in February. So the residents of Iroquois Falls—and they are a very resourceful people—they will basically have only a month—not even—to look for options on how to use that infrastructure. What we're asking today is: Will the minister stand with us and keep that mill heated so the residents of Iroquois Falls and of northern Ontario have a chance to look for options for their future?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I thank the member for the question. I got the call on Friday morning about half an hour before the press release went out. Let me just take a minute to offer my concern and support and anguish to the new mayor, who, quite frankly, sounds like he has been hit by a truck: Mayor Shea—very difficult circumstances. I also talked to Al Spacek in his capacity with FONOM and have committed to meet with them as soon as we can, or as soon as they are able.

The member makes a good point: The integration of the forestry sector is also at play here. As difficult as this is for the community of Iroquois Falls, this decision by Resolute obviously has implications for the sawmills in

the region as well. If they lose their biggest customer for their chips and the residual that comes out of their saw-mills, it has a big implication for them.

We're open and willing to discuss any options that may be available, and have already extended that to the mayor and to FONOM as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the minister for his response, but the crucial question is still—maybe everyone doesn't know this, but in northern Ontario, once a frost sets in a building, it's ruined. We've got a month because, basically, when you shut her down before Christmas, you're not going to do much over Christmas. On the 1st of February, the heat is off. We've got basically a month.

I'm impressed by what he has done so far, but we need the government to stand with the people of northeastern Ontario and make sure that that mill stays heated so we have the option to look at our future.

Hon. Bill Mauro: This facility, as I understand it, is primarily and only a newsprint-producing facility. I'm not in a position to state with certainty exactly what's possible with this facility. But what I do know is that this decision was based solely on the fact that newsprint demand over the last 10 or 15 years has basically been cut by 50%, 60%, 70% in North America or worldwide. I don't know how much opportunity there is to transfer this facility into some other capacity. What I do know is that it has an impact on the greater region.

I'm willing to listen; we're willing to talk. I can't make any commitments to you here today. But at the heart of this is the fact that there is, and continues to be, a significant declining demand for newsprint in the North American markets. That is what fundamentally underpinned the decision that was made by Resolute last week.

I would say it wasn't just in Ontario; they closed two machines in Quebec as well. I asked them, "Are you transferring capacity to another jurisdiction?" No. They just removed the capacity from the system. There's no market for newsprint anymore—or a significantly declining market.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, in my riding of Halton, we have a growing number of young families, and an increasing number of young children who are approaching school age. There's no question: Communication is a key skill for kids in school life, and we know that the sooner we address speech and language difficulties in a child's life, the more successful they tend to be. But when speech and language difficulties go undetected, they can have a devastating effect on the lives of children and youth.

Minister, studies show us that about one in 10 children need help developing speech and language skills. This means that a lot of young people in my riding could be facing an uphill battle.

Minister, what steps has the Ministry of Children and Youth Services taken on this issue?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you to the member from Halton for asking this very important question. Just last week, we committed an additional \$6.9 million over the next two years to Ontario's Preschool Speech and Language Program. Prior to this investment, the funding for the program totalled \$36.2 million. What this really means, in terms of how it affects children, is that it will benefit 10,000 more children who need speech and language services.

We're very proud of our achievements with the Ontario Preschool Speech and Language Program. Last year it provided services to more than 58,000 children with important communication and support services. This will make it easier for children and their families to access services sooner, and provide the resources they need to progress through their important developmental stages of life.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the minister for highlighting how our government is working to make sure children who experience speech and language disorders get the services and the help they need in the critical early years.

I know members in my riding will be happy to know that the government will be providing millions of dollars in funding for ErinoakKids, an agency leader in the development of children's speech and language skills. This funding will help thousands of children get vital preschool speech and language therapy services.

Minister, I would be interested in knowing how these investments fit into our government's Special Needs Strategy and how quickly these investments will begin to be seen.

1120

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Earlier this year, our government announced our Special Needs Strategy with the goal of improving the experience and outcomes for children with special needs. It will improve the services for children and their families by offering earlier identification, improved service planning and coordination in the delivery of rehabilitation services.

What's really important, Speaker, is this funding will be allocated to the 31 preschool and language agencies in a very fair and transparent manner.

It's also important to note that every agency will receive funding to reduce their wait-lists—absolutely every agency. Half that money will flow this fiscal, which goes until March, and families will be able to start benefiting sooner from this funding, and almost immediately.

I look forward to working together with our common goal, which is an Ontario where every child and youth succeeds.

DEFIBRILLATION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister,

my federal counterpart, Scott Reid, had donated defibrillators to our local police forces a few years back. However, when the OPP took over the Perth police in April of last year, the OPP removed this life-saving equipment from their police cars. For three months, I have asked for a response from you, but to no avail.

Minister, it's anyone's guess where these AEDs are now. But, more importantly, why would the OPP, who are often the first responders to our highway accidents, remove these AEDs, and why can't you answer a simple question from a member of this Legislature?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: First of all, I want to take this opportunity to thank our OPP officers for the incredible work they do in our communities 24/7. We should be thanking them every single moment, given the work they do, putting themselves in dangerous situations in our communities.

I have had a great opportunity, as the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, to meet with a lot of OPP officers, to visit detachments and meet mayors whose communities benefit from the services that the OPP officers provide. At every instance, Speaker, I have residents and local leaders telling me how grateful they are to the OPP services.

I have had the opportunity—the member has raised the issue, and I have assured the member opposite that we are looking into this matter. Once I have more fulsome information available, I will be sitting down with him and relaying that to him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Back to the minister: Minister, for three months now, I have called your office. I have sent you letters. I have spoken with you in this House. Where are these AEDs? Minister, please explain to me, and everybody in this House, the logic behind your policy that removes defibrillators from our police services.

Minister, what you just did, that response, was atrocious. I've got a simple question to you: Where are the AEDs, and why do you have such a ridiculous policy that takes AEDs out of OPP cruisers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member opposite very much recognizes, and I'm sure everybody in this House will expect, that when it comes to decisions like what equipment to use and how to use it, that it is not a political decision. That is a decision that is made by the Ontario Provincial Police, as it should be. That is not a decision that we, the non-experts in matters relating to policing, should be making.

As I have given my commitment to the member opposite, as my office has been working with the member opposite, we are looking into the matter. As soon as we have that information available, Speaker, we will share it with the member, and I will even take his advice into account. But, again, when it comes to matters of safety and security of our communities, I will listen to our police service. I will listen to the OPP any single day versus this member opposite.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Auto industry jobs are vital to Ontario. Economists are telling us that for every one job in a major auto assembly plant, there are 10 spinoff jobs that depend on it. Auto sales are strong, but there are worries about more auto plants leaving Ontario as the Canadian manufacturing footprint commitment signed in 2009 is coming to an end.

I'm surprised to see the Conservatives talking about this. They were clear in 2009: "Let GM fail and let the jobs leave Ontario." Without an auto strategy, the Liberals will be putting manufacturing jobs at risk in the exact same way the PCs wanted to back then.

Will this government commit to a unified and integrated auto strategy for this province that will protect our manufacturing sector and keep good-paying jobs here in Ontario, in places like Oshawa, St. Catharines, Niagara, Windsor and Ingersoll?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for his passion for the auto sector. It's great to see that coming from the NDP. It's great to see it coming from the member because, to be frank, just a number of weeks ago we announced a very significant investment in Alliston, an \$857-million investment by Honda to support 4,000 jobs and tens of thousands of supply chain jobs, with an investment from the province of \$85.7 million, and the view from the NDP was lukewarm at best. So if your position is that you support the investments we've made—in all, we've invested \$800 million over the last 10 years in the sector to accrue \$10 billion of investment from the private sector in Ontario's auto sector. If you support those investments, we're really pleased to have your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Minister, you might not know that, but I participated in the 2009 footprint agreement, so I absolutely have passion for the auto sector.

We've lost jobs in the truck plant. We've lost jobs in transmission. We've lost jobs in the components plant. The footprint is important. We have so many advantages here in Ontario that manufacturers look to: our low Canadian dollar, our universal medical system and our highly educated and skilled workforce. General Motors is committed to keeping 16% of its North American manufacturing here in Canada with the agreement signed in 2009. It is ending in 2016. What we need now is a promise from this Liberal government that they will support an extension of the Canadian manufacturing footprint commitment.

With a comprehensive, sensible and unified auto plan, we can protect thousands and thousands of manufacturing jobs and pensions—just as important, pensions—here in Ontario. Can we expect this government to do just that?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member can expect this government to do what we've been doing, and that is to keep working with our auto sector partners making very significant investments in the auto sector; \$800 million we've invested over the last 10 years to accrue \$10 billion of private sector investment. That's the biggest commitment any government has ever made to the auto sector.

We'll continue to work with our auto partners. We'll continue to work hard to continue to maintain and grow that footprint that the member talks about.

I welcome his passion. I hope that the NDP's words are matched by their actions as they support the investments that we have made and will continue to make in the auto sector in this province.

VICTIM SERVICES AWARDS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Ma question est pour la procureure générale. Attorney General, I understand that each year you recognize the exceptional achievements of dedicated professionals and volunteers in the field of victim services in Ontario with your victim services awards of distinction. These services are essential to victims of crime. The services include counselling, referrals and financial support, which all work to decrease the trauma that victims experience.

My riding of Davenport has a number of shining examples of organizations that provide these crucial services. West Neighbourhood House provides counselling services for women and children who are experiencing or have experienced abusive relationships. These counsellors work to help victims make positive changes in their own lives.

The individuals who do work in this field should be proud of what they do, and I feel they should be publicly recognized. Speaker, can the Attorney General please share more information about these awards and inform this House who would be eligible for a victim services award of distinction?

1130

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to the member from Davenport for this very important question.

The victim services awards of distinction were established in 2006 to recognize the high-quality services and support that people and organizations provide to victims of crime on a daily basis throughout the province. The awards were created to recognize the great work of individuals who are personally impacted by crime and have raised the profile of victims' issues in Ontario.

The nominee must be an Ontario resident and may be an individual victim of crime, their family members or others personally impacted by crime who have raised the profile of victims' issues in Ontario; volunteers who offer their time and personal resources to help victims; professional practitioners and paid victim services providers who have gone above and beyond their duty; or pro-

grams, groups or organizations that deliver innovative services to victims of crime.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I thank the Attorney General for that response. I am pleased to hear that our government recognizes the exceptional achievement of dedicated professionals and volunteers in the field of victim services, as well as the good work of individual victims.

I know of individuals in my constituency who have dedicated countless hours towards this honourable cause. I also strongly believe that once an individual goes through a program such as this, the individual, as well as the community, benefits.

Can the Attorney General please tell this House how to nominate and submit an application for the victim services awards?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to the member of Davenport for a very important question.

If you would like to submit a nomination, you need to complete a nomination form, and those nomination forms are available on my ministry's website.

Your nomination form must be signed by either the nominee or a person authorized to sign the form. Detailed instructions that explain how to complete and submit a nomination are included on the form. Completed forms need to be mailed to the Attorney General's victim services awards of distinction, and the deadline is December 12, this upcoming Friday.

I encourage all members to consider submitting an application to recognize someone from their riding. The individuals who work and volunteer in this field are essential to the community, and on behalf of my ministry and the Premier, I want to thank all of them who are helping those victims.

DRUG SHORTAGE

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is for the Premier. In the past two years, there have been over 500 reports of pharmaceuticals that are either in short supply or completely unavailable. Why has this government made no apparent effort to ensure that our province's health care needs—specifically, life-saving medication—are being met?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, in fact, what the member opposite is alleging is not actually the case. We have worked across the country with our colleague provinces to make sure that there is a rational process whereby those drugs that come on the market and are available elsewhere become available at a cost that is reasonable across the country. We have actually worked through the Council of the Federation of Premiers, through the Ministers of Health, to make sure there is a process that's nationwide and allows for the accessibility of pharmaceuticals across the country.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, our provincial counterparts in other provinces are already working cooperatively with the federal government to address this issue and produce concrete solutions. We all heard from people from the Epilepsy Foundation last week that they're having trouble finding their meds.

The reality is this: Ontarians are simply not getting the best health care available, and their government is not looking at proactive solutions to get health care back on track and shortages under control.

When will this government start taking Ontario's drug shortage problem seriously?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're actually working with the other provinces as well, we're working as part of that national process, so I'm not sure exactly where the member opposite is getting her information, because we are part of that pan-Canadian process; in fact, our Minister of Health was very much a part of creating that panel. So we are working across the country. We have a good working relationship with the health ministers across the country, and we will continue to work—as drugs become available, as they are proven to be efficacious, and as we work with our colleagues across the country—to make sure they are available to people in Ontario.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. In September, I wrote the minister asking when the South West Detention Centre would accommodate male intermittent offenders. Now, four months later, I'm informed that, for the time being, male intermittents from Windsor will continue to be sent to Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre because it is under capacity. In the time he took to answer my letter, one offender committed suicide and the facility was on lockdown for a week. Overcrowding at EMDC has been one of the triggers for all the problems there. Does the minister truly believe this facility is under capacity?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for asking this question. As the member alluded to herself, she has written to me on this issue and I sent her a response letting her know that the South West Detention Centre is going through the process of making sure that it gets to full capacity.

But as I explained to her before, and as I think all members will recognize, when you open a new detention centre, you don't just open all the doors immediately and get it filled up. There's a process. There's a protocol that is put in place to, in a progressive way, open the detention centre, primarily to ensure the health and safety of our correctional staff. They work extremely hard, and we need to make sure that they are comfortable with the new facility and they know all the protocols well. As that process is under way, we'll make sure that the South West Detention Centre is filled fully to its capacity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Perhaps the minister didn't understand the question—I asked the minister if he truly believes EMDC is under capacity, not South West Detention Centre.

Just because you can do something doesn't mean you should. The minister thinks that throwing a mattress or two on the floor is a safe and effective way to increase capacity. He thinks that shuffling offenders out of EMDC to make room for intermittent offenders doesn't cost the taxpayers anything. Perhaps the minister should head down to Toronto South today and attend their information picket after question period. Maybe then he will actually gain an understanding of our correctional facilities.

Why won't the minister listen to corrections officers, inmates and families, and fix the deplorable state of corrections in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's very clear what the member opposite is trying to do. She's trying to inject herself in a collective bargaining process, which is highly inappropriate. I think the member opposite should know better—there is collective bargaining that is going on, and we should respect that process.

Our focus is to make sure that we do transform our correctional system. The Premier has given me a very strong mandate in that regard, and we will do so by working with our correctional staff, working with our management, working with the experts, to make sure that we are focused on rehabilitation and reintegration of our inmates as they come back into our community, also at the same time ensuring that our correctional facilities are safe places to work for our hard-working correctional staff.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There being no deferred votes, this House is recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's my pleasure to welcome today some guests from the Golden Age Village for the Elderly in our members' gallery. We have David Diêu Phạm, vice-chair; Linh Nguyễn, treasurer; Sĩ Minh Trần, deputy secretary general; and Tanya Thanh Nhã Nguyễn, secretary general. Thank you for coming.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JASON VERKAİK

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would like to congratulate Jason Verkaik from my riding, a Holland Marsh farmer who was the recipient of the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence.

Jason is the owner of Carron Farms, which grows heirloom carrots that come in red, purple, black, white, yellow and orange. He received the Premier's award for

his work that adapts existing computerized equipment from Europe to ensure that each bag contains not only the right weight, but the proper mix of colours.

Jason has had many previous successes, as well, having been a finalist for the Ontario Outstanding Young Farmers award in 2011.

Congratulations to Jason on all your success, and to the entire Carron Farms family. Thank you for contributing not only to our local community but to the entire province.

It is because of people like Jason that Ontario's agri-food sector is so vibrant and remains crucial to our provincial economy. I can also attest to the flavour of the many carrots that Jason grows on his farm. It's fun to get a bag of many-coloured carrots.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to commend the advocacy efforts of two dental hygiene students at the Ontario Dental Education Institute in Ancaster. Nicole Obermeyer and Rachelle Taylor recently met with my constituency staff to advocate for better access to dental care.

I was shocked to learn that for every \$100 spent on oral health in Ontario, this government contributes just \$1.50. Nicole and Rachelle ask that we make preventive care more widely available, that we increase dental funding to the Canadian average and that we improve programs for housebound citizens. Nicole and Rachelle presented their ideas with passion, intelligence and eloquence, a standard that each of us in this House aspires to.

People in low-paid and precarious work rarely have access to benefit packages, and certainly not to the ones that include good dental coverage, yet dental diseases result in pain, serious health problems and heavy financial cost. One in six Canadians do not seek dental care, even when they are in dire pain, because they cannot afford it.

The people who decide that dental care is not important are usually those who already have excellent care through benefit packages, as we do here at Queen's Park. I was appalled to learn from my NDP colleague from Nickel Belt this morning that this government is cutting preventive dental care for tens of thousands of vulnerable children. I will fight these unjust cuts and instead advocate for wider access to dental care in Ontario, as Nicole and Rachelle have argued.

LOUISE SPROULE

Mr. Grant Crack: I rise today to recognize an outstanding citizen in my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. On November 6, this province acknowledged an Ontario citizen for her impactful and long-standing commitment to the community. The Lieutenant Governor presented 13 awards at a ceremony held here in Toronto, including one to Louise Sproule of Vankleek Hill, who

was recognized with a 2014 Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship.

This award, created in 1973, recognizes people who have made an exceptional long-term contribution to the quality of life in their communities. Louise was acknowledged for her extraordinary commitment to local fundraising efforts and for her enormously important Yes, Women Can! event which showcases female entrepreneurs.

She was also responsible for spearheading and organizing the restoration of the historic Higginson Tower in Vankleek Hill, which was originally built in 1932 as a wind-powered gristmill and then transformed into an observatory tower.

In 2013 she celebrated her incredible 20th anniversary of ownership of *The Review*—that's a local newspaper—a beacon of award-winning journalism, community engagement and charitable involvement.

I first had the opportunity of meeting Louise in 1994 when I was mayor of Alexandria. Throughout my political career, Louise and *The Review* have always provided comprehensive political coverage; there were only a few editorials, perhaps, that raised my eyebrows.

Her commitment to her community demonstrates the spirit of active citizenship. I am extremely proud of Louise and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation on behalf of everyone in Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. Congratulations, Louise: You're a very worthy recipient of this year's Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship.

SALVATION ARMY

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to recognize an extraordinary effort by the Salvation Army Central East Division. On December 1, the Salvation Army collected over 12,000 pounds of donations for the local food bank in the town of Bracebridge. In one day, with over 150 volunteers from the community—including local emergency services staff—they were able to accomplish this. Some 12,000 pounds of food in one day is an amazing feat.

I would like to recognize all the volunteers who contributed to make the holiday food drive a success. I'm proud of the generosity of individuals with both the donations of food and time through volunteering. Through these efforts, the Salvation Army provides a tremendous service to our communities across Ontario.

On December 12—this Friday—I will be participating in the local Moose FM Kids Christmas Radiothon in support of the Salvation Army. The annual radiothon is run by Moose stations in Huntsville, Bracebridge and Parry Sound. Money raised through the radiothon contributes tens of thousands of dollars annually to provide much-needed services, including emergency food relief, emergency assistance with utilities, and emergency housing and accommodations.

Locally, the Salvation Army also gets results through non-traditional methods. One which I would like to

highlight is the donation of firewood for families and individuals in need, particularly with winters like the one we experienced last year. The difference in people's lives that the donations to the Salvation Army make cannot be measured simply in dollar amounts.

I would like to thank Lieutenant Fred Reid, pastor of the Salvation Army in Bracebridge, and all of the Salvation Army and volunteers for the great work they do in providing this assistance to families in need, particularly at this time of year.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to sound the alarm bells about cuts coming to dental care to vulnerable children here in our province. In August 2015, about eight short months from now, this government plans to remove clinical preventative oral health services from the Ontario Public Health Standards. What does that mean, Speaker? It means that thousands of children whom public health units identified as in need of preventative oral health care will lose access.

The government says that they have increased eligibility to 70,000 children as of April of this year. They say that they are integrating several different programs and that funding will stay the same. This all sounds pretty good, but it could be quite misleading because, come August of next year, the new program's proposed income cut-off will mean that services will be denied to thousands and thousands of children in need of oral care.

Don't take it from me, Mr. Speaker. Listen to Dr. David McKeown, medical officer of health for Toronto Public Health. He says that for his public health, 15,000 children will be cut off. Go to northwestern Ontario with Dr. Mark Perrault from the Northwestern Health Unit, and he says that 98% of their children will no longer qualify. The Association of Local Public Health Agencies is also sounding the alarm bell. Things have to change. Those children need our support.

1310

LISAARD HOUSE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Last week, I attended the annual feather party in support of Lisaard House in Cambridge and chatted with executive director Connie Dwyer, who reminded me about what a special place it is.

In 1998, Sheila O'Donovan and her late husband, Val, founder of COM DEV in Cambridge, gave \$1 million to establish a free-standing residential hospice in Waterloo region. Today, Lisaard House is a cancer hospice providing quality end-of-life palliative care. Staff welcomes its residents without charge to a home-like environment offering support to the resident and their family.

I recall Val saying, "I want Lisaard House to be better than home," and in many ways this hospice achieves just that. All six bedrooms have a gorgeous view through

large-windowed doors and all rooms are decorated with serene countryside paintings. The sunroom with lounge chairs and heated floors is a favourite spot for all to watch birds at the feeders.

When I used to refer families to Lisaard House, I knew that staff and volunteers would look after residents' needs and let them focus on making the most of their last days. I commend the dedicated staff and volunteers for the incredible care they give to these families at such an emotional time in their journey. I know that Cambridge citizens will continue to support Lisaard as it opens a new hospice named Innisfree with another eight to 10 beds in the very near future.

FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Michael Harris: While we've recently seen a return to the old Liberal politics of blaming Ottawa for our province's fiscal woes, we've also seen a reminder of the benefits of Conservative economic values, both on a national and local level.

I spoke a couple of weeks ago about the economic example set by Wilmot council in achieving debt-free status. So too can this province learn from the examples being set by the very government Wynne Liberals point at with one hand while seeking handouts with the other.

Instead of pointing fingers under a cloud of a \$12.5-billion deficit, the province would do well to learn from a federal government that has achieved a \$1.6-billion surplus.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm glad the finance minister is here to listen to this. While Ontario's deficit grows more ominous with each scandal, squandering tax dollars on eHealth, gas plants and MaRS buildings, the federal surplus means a whole realm of opportunities for Canadians.

In implementing Conservative economic values instead of feeding a government spending addiction, the Harper team is supporting and giving back to Canadian families. In fact, the federal government has announced a \$27-billion package of family-focused tax cuts, including income-splitting for families for a possible \$2,000 benefit and an increase and expansion of the universal child care benefit of up to \$160 a month.

You see, this is what leadership looks like: taking care of economic priorities in order to take better care of our people. When members opposite are pointing their fingers at Ottawa, I'd ask them to take a look at their target, as if they don't learn from the national example, it's the closest they'll get to fiscal responsibility here in Ontario for the next four years.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Mr. Speaker, I have some positive information to offer you from Waterloo region. This past Friday, I had the opportunity of joining female engineering students and faculty at the University of Waterloo, where they have the largest school of engineer-

ing in Canada. The event was to mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. With 14 female students lighting candles in a very solemn memorial, we were reflecting on the events 25 years ago at the École Polytechnique in Montreal. Fourteen female engineering students there were senselessly murdered, singled out by a disturbed gunman because of their gender.

I remember covering this tragic event and locally asking the question, what would compel someone to act out so violently against women? Twenty-five years later, we're still asking that same question. In recent weeks, we have seen a very heightened awareness surrounding this issue. I'm encouraged to see our government taking action to raise awareness, to support victims and to remain committed to stopping violence and harassment against women.

I have a daughter who is currently attending the University of Waterloo, and she is the same age as some of the victims who were killed on December 6, 1989. So for her sake and for the sake of women and girls in my community, across Ontario and Canada, we need to remain vigilant in ending all forms of violence against our gender.

MIRACLE LEAGUE OF OTTAWA

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I rose before you for the first time as the MPP for Ottawa–Orléans on July 8 to talk about a project that's very dear to me, the Miracle League of Ottawa. At that time, I urged everyone to vote online for this project. Though we did not win the grand prize, the organization was lucky enough to receive a generous donation from the Toronto Blue Jays.

Today, I rise again as a proud resident of Ottawa because we succeeded. We did it. We will soon have an accessible baseball field.

It is a privilege and an honour to have been part of this amazing adventure to build the first-ever baseball diamond and playground for children with disabilities in the country.

The president of the Miracle League of Ottawa, Mr. David Gourlay, along with the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, city councillors Stephen Blais, Jody Mitic, former councillor Rainer Bloess, representatives of the Rotary Club of Orléans and, most of all, Bryce Desrochers, an extraordinary 11-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, joined me for the official groundbreaking on November 28 at the future baseball field in Notre-Dame-des-Champs.

This is a remarkable community project that will make an enormous difference in the lives of local children and their families.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order, the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks very much, Speaker. I appreciate you hearing my point of order.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce to you a friend of mine. He's in the west members' gallery. He lives in the "Jewel of the Rideau." I'd like to introduce to you the former mayor of the municipality of Merrickville-Wolford, Doug Struthers, a great friend of the Legislature.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, assumes ballot item number 30 and Ms. Scott assumes ballot item number 52.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Hunter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Associate Minister of Finance for a brief statement.

Hon. Mitzi Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to introduce the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014. This proposed act would, if passed, require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan by January 1, 2017, and lay out a framework for the creation of the plan.

The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan would help to strengthen the retirement income system and ensure that working Ontarians are better able to enjoy their retirement years.

POOLED REGISTERED PENSION PLANS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LES RÉGIMES DE PENSION AGRÉÉS COLLECTIFS

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 57, Loi créant un cadre pour les régimes de pension agréés collectifs et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To the Minister of Finance for a brief statement.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I rise in the House today to introduce the Pooled Registered Pension Plan Act, 2014. This proposed act would, if passed, provide a legal framework for the establishment and administration of a type of pension plan that is accessible to employees and self-employed persons, and that pools the funds in members' accounts to achieve lower costs in relation to investment management and plan administration.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Monday, December 8, 2014, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1323 to 1328.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Members, take your seats, please.

Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 13. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crack, Grant
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fraser, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoggarth, Ann
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor

McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Takhara, Harinder S.
Venille, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby

Gretzky, Lisa
Hillier, Randy
Mantha, Michael

Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John

Bisson, Gilles
Clark, Steve
Fife, Catherine
Gélinas, France

Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Sattler, Peggy
Tabuns, Peter

Walker, Bill
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 20.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, at this time, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is there unanimous consent? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items number 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 be waived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the pleasure of the House? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, beginning on January 1, 2013, the WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

"Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and send it with page Nicole.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges...;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Mikaila to bring it to the Clerk.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before we continue with further petitions, I would just ask the House again to reflect some courtesy and respect to those who are stating the petitions. They are very important and I would like to be able to hear them. I'm sure others would as well.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is, in fact, a very important petition, and I'm glad you got the House's attention for it. This is for an east Toronto French secondary school.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto (Beaches–East York and Toronto–Danforth) and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school (grades 7-12) yet in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

"Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 7 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even

provided funds to open some secondary schools, and yet, not a single French secondary school has opened in east Toronto; and

"Whereas the commissioner of French-language services stated in a report in June 2011 that '... time is running out to address the serious shortage of at least one new French-language school at the secondary level in the eastern part of the city of Toronto'; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education and that the various components of our education system should be aligned to serve the needs of students; and

"Whereas parents and students from both French Catholic and French public elementary schools in east Toronto are prepared to find common ground across all language school systems to secure space for a French-language secondary school in east Toronto;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school ... in the community by September 2015, so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live."

I agree with the petition. I sign my name and leave it with—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Beaches–East York. Just a reminder: You can shorten those petitions if you care to do so.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment takes immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Moiz.

1340

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

"Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the following actions:

"(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;

"(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

"(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario."

I support this petition totally, affix my signature and will give it to page Ella to take to the table.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have here a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I'm very happy to support this petition, Speaker. I'm going to fix my name to it and hand it to page Jenny.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has proposed a 148% increase in the province's aviation fuel tax over the next four years; and

"Whereas the tax increase will mean the average family can pay an estimated extra \$50 to \$200 for the flight on top of their tickets; and

"Whereas the massive tax increase: (1) punishes consumers and communities; (2) makes Ontario a less attractive destination to invest and expand into; and (3) compounds an already large competitiveness gap with neighbouring US airports; and

"Whereas the flight tax increase flies in the face of a Liberal election promise of no tax increases on the middle class; and

"Whereas the proposed tax increase will drive away over 400,000 air travellers out of Ontario when three million Ontarians are already crossing the border annually to fly from US airports; and

"Whereas this tax increase will impact many industries across Ontario including manufacturers, freight and tourism including hotels, restaurants, travel agents and tour operators, among others who support the tourism industry; and

"Whereas British Columbia, New Brunswick, Alberta, Quebec and Saskatchewan have eliminated international flight fuel taxes, while Ontario's rate is set to become one of the highest fuel taxes in the world; and

"Whereas Dr. Fred Lazar of the Schulich School of Business indicates in his study that this tax increase will cost the province up to 2,907 full-time jobs and decrease provincial GDP by up to \$97 million annually;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Ground the flight tax increases pending meaningful consultation and a full study of their adverse economic impacts before it's too late to reverse the damage to Ontario's economy."

I support this petition, will sign my name and send it with Kate, the page.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further petitions? The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was one of the nicest introductions I've heard, so keep it up.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to page Moiz to bring down to the table to the Clerks.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding population-based legal services funding. It's signed by a lot of people, mostly from Mississauga, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human and social services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of new and existing funding in the Ontario budget and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it down with page Nicole.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by

amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old are exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and support this petition and send it to the table with page Joshua.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

"Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

"Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

"Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

"Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Attorney General's office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause."

It is my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Vida.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I agree with this petition, attach my name to it and give it to Mikaila to bring down to the desk.

1350

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SECTOR AND MPP ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION ET LA TRANSPARENCE DU SECTEUR PUBLIC ET DES DÉPUTÉS

Ms. Matthews moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts / Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la responsabilisation et la transparence du secteur public et des députés par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur la rémunération des cadres du secteur parapublic et la modification de diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm pleased to recognize the Deputy Premier and President of the Treasury Board to lead off.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I rise in the House today to begin third reading debate on the proposed Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014.

I do want to take a moment and acknowledge and thank my parliamentary assistant, who, by the way, is celebrating his birthday today: Yvan Baker, the member from Etobicoke Centre. I thank the member for his leadership during committee. I also want to thank all members of the Standing Committee on General Government for their very hard work on this bill.

There were many people who worked to bring this bill forward. I want to give a special shout-out to Olivia Nero in my office, who has nurtured this bill along. She's done an outstanding job with the whole team in the public service and in my office as well.

I'm very proud of Bill 8, and I'm even more proud of our democratic system. We heard hours of debate by members from all parties, and at committee we heard from people and organizations from all walks of life across Ontario. Very good points were raised. That's why our government has responded by introducing amendments that would clarify the provincial Ombudsman's role regarding municipalities to reduce overlap and

duplication. It would modernize lobbyist registration by requiring individuals who spend 50 hours or more lobbying government to register with the Integrity Commissioner as lobbyist registrar and would expand the list of persons who may make complaints to the patient ombudsman. The committee also accepted a number of amendments from opposition parties that would strengthen the proposed bill even further.

While there were different views and perspectives, one thing is clear: All members of the House see the importance of and need for accountability and transparency measures.

Our proposed bill is broad in scope, touching upon school boards, universities, municipalities, the health care sector, government agencies and even elected members of the Legislative Assembly itself. We are committed to being the most open and transparent government in Canada.

This is a signature piece of legislation, a foundational piece of legislation upon which we will build Ontario up by growing the economy, creating jobs, balancing the budget and looking after every tax dollar. The accountability bill is an important step in our plan to transform government so that we can not only meet our fiscal targets but, more importantly, do government differently, do government better.

The people of Ontario have a right to know how their dollars are being spent, and that includes executive compensation. This legislation would, if passed, authorize the government to control the compensation of executives in the broader public sector and to take action to ensure compliance.

This government has the right plan for executive compensation. The provisions in this bill would give the government the right to access all compensation-related information so that we can set up compensation frameworks, including sector-specific hard caps. If the proposed legislation is passed, the government would take a strong and fair approach to developing compensation frameworks that would provide consistency and clarity. That's why we would consult with each sector as the proposed frameworks were being developed. We want to ensure that sector-specific considerations are built in.

The proposed bill, if passed, would also include enforcement and compliance measures, and our government would have the ability to audit any of these organizations to ensure that they are in compliance with these frameworks.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would apply to hospitals, community care access corporations, school boards, universities, colleges and hydro organizations. During committee, the government introduced an amendment that would add 64 other broader public sector organizations, such as Ornge, LHINs, eHealth, Metrolinx, OLG and LCBO. The government also brought forward amendments to ensure that existing executives are fully subject to all elements of an applicable compensation framework upon expiry of a three-year transition period. We know that every dollar counts, and all of our partners have a role to play.

The Ombudsman of Ontario plays a key role in promoting high standards and helping to address issues in the delivery of services. That's why the proposed changes to the Ombudsman Act would expand the role of the Ontario Ombudsman to municipalities, school boards and universities.

Our government respects municipalities and the work of municipal councillors. Municipalities would still have the authority to appoint their own ombudsmen and integrity officers. Our proposed approach would enable the Ontario Ombudsman to step in only after local processes have been completed. At the same time, the Ontario Ombudsman, as he now can for provincial matters, would be able to investigate municipal matters on his own initiative.

Our government has heard the concerns about overlap and duplication, and we have responded. During committee, the government introduced an amendment to exempt complaints within the jurisdiction of the Toronto ombudsman from the Ontario Ombudsman's jurisdiction. This recognizes that Toronto has an established accountability framework and is the only municipality in Ontario required by law to have an ombudsman. The Ontario Ombudsman could still include Toronto, along with any other municipality, in a systemic, broad-ranging investigation.

Municipalities would continue to have the authority to appoint their own closed-meeting investigators, and the Ontario Ombudsman would not be able to investigate a closed-meeting complaint if a local meeting investigator is appointed. Our proposed legislative changes are about making sure that every Ontarian in every municipality has access to an ombudsman.

The bill would, if passed, provide the Ontario Ombudsman with the authority to investigate school boards and universities. Our educational institutions play a critical role in our province and for our economy, and we value their contributions immensely. If our bill is passed, the Ombudsman would be required to respect the principles of academic freedom when conducting investigations. The proposed approach would enable the Ontario Ombudsman to investigate only after all internal school board or university processes have been completed. This would minimize any possibility of overlap or duplication.

The bill, if passed, would also improve support for patients in Ontario, in our continuing efforts to promote patient-centred care. The proposed legislation would, if passed, amend the Excellent Care for All Act to establish a patient ombudsman to receive, and work to resolve, complaints from patients and former patients of hospitals, long-term-care homes and community care access corporations. The patient ombudsman's powers and responsibilities are closely based on those of the provincial Ombudsman, but would be tailored to the health care system. Our government believes that a sector-specific approach is the right approach when it comes to the oversight of health care.

During committee, our government introduced an amendment that would add caregivers to the list of

persons who would be able to make complaints to the patient ombudsman. The government also brought forward an amendment specifying that the patient ombudsman would hold office for a term of five years and may be reappointed for one further term of five years. This would further enhance the patient ombudsman's independence and provide the appointee with security of tenure. These proposed changes would build on our efforts to improve the patient experience and the quality of health care in Ontario.

In addition, Bill 8, if passed, would allow the government to move forward on our continued commitment to restore public confidence in Ontario's air ambulance service. This bill, if passed, would protect whistleblowers, while allowing the government to take control in extraordinary circumstances. These changes would allow the government to appoint special investigators when it is in the public interest to do so. It would allow the government to appoint members to Ornge's board of directors, amend provisions of their performance agreement with a service provider at any time, by regulation, and provide protection for staff who disclose information to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

This legislation would, if passed, build on steps already taken to improve accountability, patient safety, response times and air safety at Ornge.

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When it comes to oversight, there is perhaps no greater issue than those relating to Ontario's young people, particularly children in the child protection system. That's why we are proposing to expand the mandate of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. The proposed amendments would give the advocate investigative powers for matters related to the services provided by children's aid societies and certain residential licensees where a children's aid society is the placing agency.

During committee, the government introduced amendments that would further clarify the role of the advocate's office, such as allowing the advocate, in certain situations, to decline to conduct an investigation based on a child's wishes, and providing additional protections to the advocate and the investigative staff of the advocate's office, similar to those provided to the Ontario Ombudsman's office.

Our government believes that openness begins with our elected representatives. As people who are elected into office, we need to lead by example, and that's why our government is proposing new measures that, if passed, would set a high standard and make Ontario a leader by legislating expense reporting for elected representatives.

The proposed bill, if passed, would make it mandatory for cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, opposition leaders and their staff to post their expense information online. Currently, this expense reporting is done on a voluntary basis.

Our government's proposals to report expense information online do not just stop with cabinet ministers,

PAs, opposition leaders and their staff. Under the proposed bill, online reporting of expense information would also extend to each and every one of the MPPs in the Legislature. This bill, if passed, would require the Speaker to post online information on MPP expenses concerning—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Excuse me. I would ask the opposition members to refrain from heckling the minister so that I can hear her.

I return to the Deputy Premier and President of the Treasury Board, who has the floor.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. This bill, if passed, would require the Speaker to post online information on MPP expenses concerning out-of-riding travel, related hotel expenses, meals and hospitality expenses.

Our government understands the important role transparency plays in letting the people of Ontario know who is lobbying their government and for what purpose. That's why we're proposing to modernize Ontario's Lobbyists Registration Act.

If passed, the proposed amendments would strengthen the registrar's oversight and enforcement powers and enhance the transparency of the lobbyists' registry. The proposed bill would give the Integrity Commissioner, as lobbyist registrar, investigative powers and the ability to prohibit individuals from lobbying for up to two years if they are found to have violated the act.

Lobbyists would be prohibited from lobbying and providing paid advice on the same subject matter at the same time.

A single set of rules would be established that apply to in-house lobbyists at both for-profit and non-profit organizations. Enforcement provisions would include stiffer fines: a fine of up to \$25,000 for a first-time offence, and a fine of up to \$100,000 for subsequent offences.

This bill, if passed, would also enhance the review of executive expenses in classified agencies. Since the Public Sector Expenses Review Act came into force in 2009, the Integrity Commissioner has been reviewing the expenses of 17 classified agencies and four hydro organizations, the public entities currently prescribed in regulation. Our proposed legislation, if passed, provides the Integrity Commissioner with the ability to review travel, meal and hospitality expenses of all 196 classified agencies and the four hydro organizations on a selective or rotating basis.

Lastly, Bill 8 would build on efforts to bring greater transparency to the broader public sector and help us make government more open and transparent. Proposed changes to the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act would, if passed, require designated organizations to post their business plans and other specified business or financial documents. Many broader public sector organizations already post their business plans publicly, but our proposed changes would make this voluntary practice a mandatory requirement.

Another key component of the proposed bill for enhanced accountability and transparency is our proposed

reforms on record keeping. Our government takes our record-keeping obligations very seriously. The proposed bill would require all institutions subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act to ensure that measures are in place to preserve records, to prohibit the alteration, concealment or destruction of records with the intent to deny an access request, and to make it an offence to alter, conceal or destroy records with an intent to deny an access request, with a penalty of up to \$5,000. The proposed offence provision is in line with similar offence provisions in seven other Canadian jurisdictions, including the federal government.

The proposed Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act will help us raise the bar in government and the broader public sector. It will help to have a transparent, open and accessible government that the hard-working people of Ontario deserve. I urge all members of the House to pass this important legislation, and I look forward to implementing the proposed changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to stand up and discuss Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act. I believe this is the first third reading I've had the ability to debate since being at the Legislature. It's interesting. It's time-allocated so it's not an official debate for me for third reading. However, that brings me pretty much to my point that I wanted to start out with: the process with which this bill was passed. I must quote, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

When we go forward through this process, we'll notice that I was part of the committee that this bill came through at general government, and the fact that it was time-allocated—people at home may not realize this, but the government passed a motion which limited the ability to have discussion on the amendments at the committee level, where these discussions needed to take place. There were a few hours of amendments going through the committee where we weren't allowed to ask questions or have comments on the amendment put forth in front of us. Instead, the government passed this motion that at a certain time in the middle of committee all discussion was gone, all motions were put forward and it was just basically votes going forward. I found it quite disconcerting when the government puts forth an accountability act to be accountable to the people of the province; however, the process to get this bill passed is not accountable or transparent at all. It's actually just ramming this through. I found it quite disconcerting, the fact that I had many questions and comments and discussions I would have loved to have at committee, but it was shut down. It was completely shut down.

I'll revert back to earlier. Before the committee was shut down, I put one amendment through, and it was an amendment to actually strengthen this bill to incorporate all legislative officers under the Legislative Assembly. The NDP supported our motion to make sure that their

expenses were all posted online; however, the government—excuse me; the Chair—ruled it out of order. I did want to appeal this to the Speaker; however, it was the government who voted against my appeal.

I feel the money that the taxpayers give this province is the same amount of money whether it's spent by you, me or any legislative officer, and I have no problem posting expenses online. I have nothing to hide, as opposed to maybe over on the other side of the House. I believe that all legislative officers of the House should post their expenses online. It's one pot of money we collect from the taxpayers, and I think the accountability has to be stretched across.

However, I put that amendment forward. The Chair of the committee ruled it out of order and I requested an appeal to the Speaker of the Legislature to come forward so that he could rule upon it. However, as I said before, the Liberal government ruled against that amendment and struck down a little more accountability that this province has been asking for.

After this bill was put through committee, after cutting out discussion, after the second reading previously being time-allocated, which means there's only a certain amount of time for members to speak upon this bill and offer their amendments—and at the start of the committee it was time-allocated how many people could come forth from the public across the province. Mind you, it was Toronto-centred; they didn't want to take it across the province to actually hear what people from northern, southern and eastern Ontario wanted to say about accountability. They limited the number of people who could speak to this bill and propose changes or amendments.

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So, Mr. Speaker, we go forward with this bill. I'd like to point out that the whistle-blower protection for persons who disclose information is much needed. I wish it was in place when the Ornge scandal occurred. Hopefully, this can be retroactive. Is it going to be retroactive so those people can now come forward with what really occurred and be protected? I haven't heard if that will be going forward, or is it just starting from the day the bill passes? Because there are many people out there who could be potential whistle-blowers and open up what really occurred with Dr. Mazza, Ornge and the Ministry of Health with regard to that scandal, which wasted billions of dollars and put many lives in danger due to how Ornge had been operated.

I'd also like to comment on the Ombudsman Act, to expand jurisdiction over municipal sector bodies, school boards and universities. That's welcome. I think people have been calling for that for years now. The President of the Treasury Board must know that the city she belongs to—their municipality has had quite a few run-ins with the Ombudsman with regard to their secret meetings and such. I think the people of London, let alone the province, are calling for the Ombudsman definitely getting this oversight.

I kind of wish the Ombudsman had more oversight of the health care system. I know they're creating a patient

ombudsperson. Maybe we could have cut down on the bureaucracy and just expanded the Ombudsman's powers to the health care sector. Maybe that would have been an easier step to take.

What happened, though, because this legislation was pushed through so fast, was that you ended up having legislative officers fighting at the committee level. We had the Auditor General and the Ombudsman having a public feud over this bill. I received a letter; I'm sure many MPPs in this House received letters from the Ombudsman trying to clarify the position. It's terrible that, because of the process this government wanted to follow, it caused a huge blowout between its legislative officers, which I'm sure still isn't resolved. That doesn't benefit the people of Ontario.

Lastly, I just want to comment on the fact that this bill also addresses the protection of government records and documents, probably making reference to the deleted email scandal in the Premier's office with regard to the gas plant scandal, which we didn't really hear the end result of because deliberations were taken away from us at the committee on the gas plant scandal.

Mr. Speaker, you can't legislate ethics. Unfortunately, you can have all the accountability in place, but it's the people and the policies of a government that we need to stand up and uphold their ethics and not try to—it's a hard word to say without being told to withdraw—mislead the public. Is that? No?

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I withdraw that before you stand up, Speaker. You get my point, anyway: coming forth and being truthful, expanding accountability across the planks of government. We look forward to the vote coming up and hearing the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a privilege to stand up in this House and talk about this piece of legislation, but I have very mixed feelings about Bill 8. I made it very clear at second reading how we, as a party, have struggled with a fairly comprehensive bill, which has 11 different schedules contained within it. Of course, we're supportive of some parts of that legislation; namely, schedules 4, 6, 7 and 11, which actually do speak in some part to transparency and accountability. For us, though, there are some places that really are not negotiable, and then, more broadly, it is about the process.

I share the frustration of my PC colleague: To have the bill time-allocated in the first place, to have it go to committee and then to—I mean, obviously the numbers at committee are indicative of a majority government, so we are outnumbered, outplayed. Certainly not outwitted; I just want to make that point clear. There was a limit of one hour for debate on the amendments. There were 123 amendments. Do you know why there were 123 amendments? Because this is a poorly crafted piece of legislation that does not achieve the goals it aims to meet, especially around the protection of children and on the oversight and the enforcement of integrity and dignity for

those in the health care sector. Obviously it doesn't even meet the perceived or the pretend goal of capping broader public sector executive salaries. It does not do that. If it did that, we would be in a different place.

What I really find very interesting is that, in this minority setting—I'm sorry; this majority setting—having come from a minority culture, in that minority culture the most distinctive piece is that actually there had to be some give and take. There was some exchange of ideas. So when legislation came before this House, first of all, it never came in an omnibus bill like this. It didn't. You would never put 11 different diverse pieces of legislation in a giant bill and call it "accountability and transparency." They do have somebody on staff over there on that side of the House who's incredibly creative, a poli-sci 101 grad who comes up with these titles, but that would never happen in a minority setting.

When those pieces of legislation came to this House, there would be a thorough debate and exchange. It would actually be fairly productive.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It was slower; I'll give you that. It was slower, but at the end of the day you had a stronger piece of legislation because in the committee section, when there was this vote and give and take on how to amend legislation, there was a responsibility, even a shared responsibility, to navigate that legislation through this House and to make it stronger.

That did not happen with Bill 8. After one hour, on 123 amendments—I was able to put forward numerous NDP amendments to this piece of legislation on everything from the public sector salary cap or non-cap, particularly with the provincial advocate and the Ombudsman—I never even got to that part, really.

What I want to do today, though, because even the people who were in that committee session who were watching us felt—one lady said to me that she felt like it was an abuse of process, that there was this complete disregard for their voices because it was an up-and-down vote. They didn't have their voices reflected in the debate, particularly around the provincial advocate for children.

What I had proposed to do today is to give some credence and give some respect to those voices that were not heard through this majority government. Particularly, I wanted to focus on the provincial advocate because there was such an opportunity to actually protect children in this province, and you missed it. You missed it in this—and don't take our word for it. We've raised questions in this House. We have written letters. We have petitions. We've met with the advocate. The member from Hamilton Mountain has been the critic for years now. But I'm going to read the stories, the voices of children, actually, who were not respected.

But first I want to start off with what the provincial advocate said after he came and presented to the committee, because this is a key part. He came to the committee. He had some serious amendments that were based on evidence. I always go back to this moment. There was

this moment of hope in this Legislature when the Premier of this province stood up, and do you know what she said? She said that she was going to put evidence above partisanship. The evidence in every other province in this country says that when the provincial advocate is empowered to follow through on his mandate, then children are better protected—but not in the province of Ontario. In the province of Ontario, this Bill 8 actually ties the hands of the advocate. It's shocking, because the advocate actually came over here and said that they wanted to investigate complaints from vulnerable children and youth in all areas of the advocate's mandate. What a concept, right? Bill 8 is not going to come before this House for a very long time. It says, "... not just in a children's aid society or residential licensee where a children's aid society is a placing agent." The advocate is actually asking only for the powers to do his job, as other provincial advocates have across the country.

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You know what? I'm just going to go right to the voices of children, and then I'll recap what he asked for, which was completely reasonable, which was supported by the PC caucus and which was, of course, advocated and supported by the NDP.

"The following are real examples to illustrate the need for amendments to Bill 8 in order to deliver stronger protection to all ... children and youth.

"Example one: restraints and serious occurrence reports and why provincial advocate should be permitted to investigate beyond children's aid society."

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You might want to listen to this.

"A young boy, under 12 years of age, called the advocate's office because he thought he was getting restrained too often and he wanted to be moved to a different group home. Anytime anyone uses a physical restraint on a child, a report needs to be made to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services." This is a good policy. "An advocate requested the reports and we discovered that this young man had been restrained over 100 times in one year. After analyzing the reports, we discovered that in more than half the cases, no immediate risk had been documented, which is the legal basis for using a physical restraint. This number of restraints is very high for a child of any age, much less someone under 12."

For those of us who are parents in this House—I mean, can you imagine the vulnerability and the fear that a child would experience? But can you also imagine the courage that it would take for a child to pick up the phone, when he is already outside of the margins of society? If you're in this home, and you're being restrained 100 times over the course of a year, and you're 12 years old, and you reach out to the provincial advocate—it's hard to imagine the strength that it would take for that child.

The advocate also "found similar problems with physical restraints that had been used on another little girl, also under 12. She, too, had contacted the advocate's

office because she felt the group home staff was using restraints too often and she was getting hurt.”

The pages in this House are the age of these young children.

Right now, the advocate says that they are “trying to analyze all of the serious occurrence reports from group homes that have been filed with the ministry. Unfortunately, the ministry is only willing to send us redacted reports, with the names, ages, and gender of the children involved removed.” Removed, Mr. Speaker. “So while we can determine the overall number of restraints, and the risk that necessitated the use of a restraint—if the document identifies this—we cannot determine whether other young people are at risk at this home of receiving a high number of restraints.”

So Bill 8 could have given the provincial advocate the powers to go and protect these children, but it does not. The problem of having the provincial advocate oversee young people placed in a group home by a children’s aid—this is now possible under Bill 8.

This is important. You know why? Because more and more children’s aid societies under the transformation agenda have moved out of the group home business to save money. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? It’s not saving money, because those group homes are for-profit group homes. Those for-profit group homes are in the business of making a profit. So when the profit trumps the needs of children, children lose. That’s why the provincial advocate needs to have the full scope of powers to ensure that they are protected.

“What Bill 8 won’t help, are the young people with special needs (perhaps a developmental delay or communication difficulties) who are placed in ministry funded homes but are not in CAS care. These young people may not be able to tell an advocate (or anybody else)” —and that’s really important; these children have no one else—“if there is a problem with restraints. And if we asked for the serious occurrence reports from all of the homes for children with special needs, these reports would be redacted if the language in Bill 8 stays as written”—which it did, because the amendments that we put forward were not listened to. Then children still are at risk. They are still vulnerable. They still have no one in their corner. “So, again, we will not know if particular homes were frequently using restraints, or if particular young people were being subject to many restraints, or particular young people with certain disabilities seemed to be restrained more often than others.”

I don’t know if you’ve ever had this experience when you’re campaigning in your riding, but you knock on these doors, and there’s always this one house in one neighbourhood. There’s nothing on the house. It’s very muted. You knock on the door, and usually a couple of people will come to the door. And you can usually see four or five or six—a huge range of children to young adults in that home, and that’s where they are. They’re off the grid, Mr. Speaker. They have nobody else. Bill 8 was the opportunity to change that, and this government chose not to. The members of that committee voted

against the amendments that were put forward by the provincial advocate. They ignored the most informed voice in this province on how to protect children, and they did so with intention.

For us in the NDP, it’s astounding, because why come here and bring forward a weak piece of legislation when you have a majority government and you can do the right thing? If you did the right thing, we would say that you did the right thing. Why bring forward a piece of legislation which actually continues to systemically ignore the most vulnerable children in this province? I see you don’t like hearing it. I guess my question, my sincere question to the government, is, why doesn’t the Liberal government of Ontario have the courage to respect these voices? I think that is an outstanding question that we are going to ask for the next four years, because we’re not going to give up on ensuring that the provincial child advocate has the powers that he needs—or she needs, going forward—to protect children.

The second example—and this has been a long-standing issue—that the provincial advocate brought to us and that indicates why Bill 8 fails is the investigation reports in youth justice facilities. Once again, the member from Hamilton Mountain has been championing this issue for years now, and there’s a petition actually on the books. The provincial advocate says, “For the past five years, the advocate’s office has raised concerns about the ministry’s refusal to provide copies of investigation reports into the allegations by young people in youth justice facilities who report they have been assaulted by staff. The reason we are asking for these reports is because we are concerned that the allegations are not being properly investigated. When we have managed to receive copies of investigation reports what we have found is that the investigator has relied on the written reports of the staff who were involved and then determined that the allegations are ‘unfounded.’”

So you have a systemic, documented imbalance of power, especially in a youth justice facility, where there is a whole host of issues that come into play in these facilities, from addiction to mental health as well. It’s actually impossible for me not to think of Ashley Smith in this regard. That was a federal prison. She had no advocate. She had no one in her corner. Her parents, who loved her, were shut out of the system. The provincial advocate, in this process, has said, “Let me at least find out the information.” If the allegations are not true, then that’s great. That’s the best-case scenario. But if the allegations have some truth to them and inmates who are in youth justice facilities are being assaulted, then we have a serious problem—a serious problem.

The child advocate goes on to say, “We believe that whenever a young person alleges an assault by staff, a thorough investigation should take place”—I don’t understand why the government doesn’t think that that’s a reasonable thing—“and anyone who was a party to the incident or witnessed it should be interviewed. This is consistent with the ministry’s Child Protection Standards for child welfare investigations into allegations made by

children in institutions.” Why have a policy on the books? If a child makes an allegation, why not follow through on that allegation? Why not ensure that those allegations are tested? It’s a prevention piece and it’s a respect piece and it’s a trust piece. At the very base of this issue, it comes down to trust.

“In one recent case,” the child advocate goes on to say, “a young person alleged staff ‘kneed, kicked, and punched him in the face and ribs while he was handcuffed and shackled.’” We read about situations like this in the most horrendous countries, in countries where human rights are not respected. Yet we have a report here on the books that this happened and the provincial child advocate does not have the power to do a thorough investigation.

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In another case, a young person who is in a youth justice facility said that the staff “ran at me and charged me into a wall.” Why would we not want to find out if that actually happened or not? And if that did happen, why would we not want to address it head-on with the full force of the provincial advocate’s office?

He goes on to say, “As the provincial child advocate, I believe I need to be able to confirm for myself—not just take the assurances of others—that these very serious allegations have been properly investigated.” This is a reasonable request. This is something that could be easily amended. Both the PC Party and the NDP put forward one of the 123 amendments to this act to ensure that those children—because that’s what they are; if they’re in a youth facility, they’re still children. They clearly have not had the same upbringing as my own children or as some of the children of the members in this room, so they’re already on the outside. They’re already marginalized, and then they come into an institution which is supposed to be a place of trust and caring and sometimes education. For the provincial advocate not to have a clear view, a clear idea, an ability or the power to investigate what actually is happening in those places makes no sense to us, nor does it to anybody, really.

So if this was a minority government, this would be a place where we would stand. We would stand on principle to make sure that children in youth facilities and to make sure that children who are in group homes actually have somebody in their corner. That would happen. But in a majority, they don’t have to listen to us. They don’t have to listen to the provincial advocate. They don’t have to listen to the Ombudsman. They don’t have to listen to the PC Party or the NDP. When you don’t listen to all of those voices, then you are moving ahead with a flawed piece of legislation and not, I would argue, as I am, fulfilling your responsibility as a government. It is a missed opportunity, not to make Bill 8 stronger for the provincial advocate.

I want to talk about the third example. In this House, we deal with provincial and demonstration schools. As a former trustee, I have some understanding of what these demonstration schools are about, and there are some challenges around them. The vast majority of these

schools actually do an amazing job of securing an education where the mainstream education system cannot deal with it.

The provincial advocate brought this as a third example. He goes on to say, “Some years ago, several students complained about being assaulted by staff at one of the provincial and demonstration schools”—just one. “These are the schools operated by the province for children who are deaf, blind, deaf-blind, and severely learning disabled. I was told by the Ministry of Education I was not entitled to any information because our legislation permitted us only to do ‘informal advocacy’”—informal advocacy—and we had no right of access to information. More recently, an 18-year-old student from one of the schools requested assistance from an advocate because he had concerns about an investigation the ministry had undertaken. The concerns were serious. My office wrote to a senior ministry bureaucrat outlining our concerns, but we were told that because the student was 18, he would have to handle it on his own and the ministry would not deal with us on this matter.”

That is a door slammed in the face of a young adult who clearly is in a demonstration school because there is nowhere else for them to be and he clearly has no other choice in the matter and then reached out, in an act of courage and strength, to the provincial child advocate, requesting some assistance around a process. Just as I have issues with the process that Bill 8 went through, this young person has issues with the process of the investigation into some serious concerns. The provincial advocate’s hands were tied.

So every time the Liberal government gets up and says, “We are expanding the powers of the provincial advocate,” you can understand the frustration that we feel on this side, because there is a whole swath, a segment of society, of the most vulnerable children who are not included in those expanded powers. This is not us saying this; this is the provincial child advocate.

Finally, the last example, because people are getting sad on that side—but it’s not a case of getting sad; it’s a case of actually changing the legislation or voting against it, voting your conscience, because this last example has to do with allegations of assault involving a child or youth in a mental health facility. These examples are heartbreaking, and they are happening in every single one of our ridings.

Last December, the Globe and Mail actually reported a story about a man who had been given a 20-year sentence for assaulting a boy at a children’s mental health facility—20 years, a 20-year sentence. This is very serious. The provincial advocate had been made aware of the situation through media reports. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services took the position that it was unable to provide information to us about the specifics of the assault or the investigation. As a result, the provincial advocate was forced to seek public court documents to learn about the circumstances of the situation, and they’re even going to need to file an FOI request to understand what steps have been taken to protect children in the future.

This is incredible. You sent the provincial advocate, who's responsible for protecting children, to court. You sent him to court to get the information that he needs to report back to you about what needs to be changed in this particular facility, and then he has to FOI the information to understand if anything has changed in that place. You can't discard this kind of information as sleight-of-hand; this is the most informed voice in the province of Ontario asking for the powers to protect children, and the committee stood down on every one of those amendments.

It defies logic. You have the power to change this situation. You have a majority government. It's a majority. You can do whatever you want. What you can't do is ignore these voices and not have the opposition stand up and charge you with neglect. This is essentially what it is. When you tie the hands of the provincial advocate by not strengthening Bill 8, you are essentially saying that you don't care about those children.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a whole segment of children that this act could encompass. You might see—I mean, it's frustrating, right? It's frustrating because the amendments that we took the time to bring forward were good amendments. They mirrored some of the requests of the provincial advocate.

The PC Party brought forward some amendments to the bill as well, seeking, quite honestly, clarity in some instances. A piece of legislation should not put children into this grey zone where they may or may not have rights.

The examples that the provincial advocate has brought forward, I think, indicate that this is a flawed piece of legislation. What I just fundamentally don't understand—I really don't—is, why would you support it? Why would you support a piece of legislation with a great little title, but that leaves these children and their lives hanging in the wind?

The provincial advocate obviously had some frustration. I think, more to the point, that the frustration also came after he met with the minister's staff. It was really quite astounding. He says, "I was very disappointed when the Minister of Children and Youth Services' office explained that my recommendations would not be accepted by the government because it would create too much 'document process' for service providers and that it would be too much to expect them to respond to a 'robust, third-party oversight.'"

So, basically, it's too much paperwork. How can that be? How can too much paperwork trump the rights of children in this province? How is that even possible, that somebody in the minister's office would say this to the provincial advocate? And they've confirmed it, as well. They've said that the mental health system is not prepared for this kind of oversight. Well, then fix the mental health service. Fix the mental health system for children and youth. I mean, this is not new news. One in five children in the province of Ontario suffers from mental health issues.

We have this act before us. You would think that there are some good parts in it, as I've said. I mean, the truly

accountable pieces, that we have supported—schedules 4, 6, 7 and 11—we have no issues with. But we have serious issues—serious ethical issues—with passing a piece of legislation which doesn't do the job of protecting children.

1440

Even more concerning in some regards, I think, are some of the amendments that the government brought forward in this committee session partway through. It has to do with schedule 9, the background on the amendment relating to the Ombudsman jurisdiction.

Government motion 83, which of course passed in committee—everything that the government wanted passed; mostly everything that we wanted passed didn't pass, and the same thing with the PCs. This government motion passed in committee, and it says that if any question arises where the Ombudsman has jurisdiction to investigate any case or class of cases under this act, the Ombudsman, or any person who is directly affected, may appeal to Divisional Court for a declaratory order determining the question.

It was really interesting. It was the first time, actually, that I met the Ombudsman. He came, and his reputation precedes him. The Auditor General had already been there, so there was already a legislative-officer-to-legislative-officer spat in the mix, which sort of took us away from the things that I've been talking about, in some respects.

He came, and he said, "No, I'm not going to bring forward any amendments." I said to the Ombudsman, "But in 2012, in your annual report, you quoted the 2,679 cases that were reported to you under the health care sector." He got those unsolicited complaints around the health care system in the province of Ontario, which he does not have oversight for, and which he still does not have oversight for, under Bill 8.

What was really interesting was that—I was surprised that he came and didn't make any amendments, and perhaps it's because it's the majority culture now. There are some things worth fighting for, and you've got to pick and choose your battles. Some of us don't have the energy to fight all the battles; some of us do.

He said in 2012 that the time was right for him, as the Ontario Ombudsman, to have oversight over the health care system in the province of Ontario, just like every other province in the country. He said that the time was right. So he came, and I said, "Well, is the time not right?" He goes, "No, no, you're right." I said, "No, actually, you were right. You were right in 2012 when you said the time was right in 2012 to have Ombudsman oversight of the health care sector." I was just genuinely surprised.

Instead of the MUSH sector—municipalities and universities and schools and hospitals—he just got MUS—municipalities, universities and schools—and not hospitals, not the biggest budget in the province of Ontario, not the \$52 billion. No, no, no. He doesn't have oversight of that, no—and there are no problems in the health care system, as you all know.

What was astounding to me is that the biggest call for Ombudsman oversight on any issue would be health care. All of us, as individual MPPs—the number one issue that comes into my office is navigating what is a layered, complex and bureaucratic health care system that was further complicated by LHINs and CCACs and the local sectors. Everyone takes a little piece of the pie as the money comes through the community, and by the time it gets down to the personal support workers, they got \$12—right?—even though they were promised \$16.

If it was up to me, I would ensure that the Ombudsman—I'd start with health care first. Right? We've been calling for Ombudsman oversight under the health care system for so many years now, and yet this government has brought forward a patient ombudsman.

I just want to say, on this piece, on this amendment that the Liberal government brought forward that would allow for the Ombudsman to seek clarification on matters of jurisdiction before the courts, the potential issue with this provision is that any individual or entity that does not want to be subject to or captured under the Ombudsman oversight can at least make an application that would halt progress on an Ontario Ombudsman investigation until the matter is settled through the courts.

What you did is promise Ombudsman oversight, but then you also gave this little trap door, a little get out of jail free, as if this is some Monopoly game: "Pass Go and get \$200." Sometimes it seems like games are being played here. You brought forward a piece of legislation, you promised Ombudsman oversight of municipalities, universities and schools, and you left out the hospitals, one of the biggest budget items in the province of Ontario. There's a huge question mark here under the motivation for that. What we have here is a trap door for Ombudsman oversight. I'd be curious to know his opinion on that. We have asked the special adviser in the Deputy Premier's office to clarify; we have not heard back.

The patient ombudsman: There are so many problems with this idea. Again, it just begs the question: Why would you not want to do something right the first time? The Ombudsman has the powers, the establishment, the administration to actually deal with these issues. Once again, I just want to bring the voices of some of those who travelled from across the province to speak to Bill 8. This one was actually Mary Gavel, who is director of navigator and patient advocacy. First of all, she points out that "Ontario is the only province that does not have Ombudsman oversight of health sector complaints." One would ask, why? We did. We still have no answer.

She says that, based on her experience, "I believe that an ombudsman must be a neutral, objective resource to which patients and family can turn when they have not been able to achieve resolution of their concerns within the health sector." She also says, "I also believe that there must be a trusting relationship for the process to be successful in achieving resolution."

This is completely reasonable. I pointed out that the patient ombudsman would be hired, of course, by the LG

and the Legislature, serve under a health care agency, and therefore be subject to the whim of that health care agency and not even necessarily—we put forward an amendment. You'll be interested to hear this: We put forward an amendment that the patient ombudsman for the province of Ontario should only have this job. This is not a huge ask, one would think.

Being a patient ombudsman is a pretty big job, but as the legislation is crafted, that person can have other jobs. They can be a waitress or a librarian. They could be a truck driver. The legislation should be very clear: If you're the patient ombudsman for the province of Ontario and you're responsible for oversight of the health care sector, then it seems reasonable—I don't know—that that would be your main job, your main responsibility.

She went on to say that she urges the committee "to examine carefully the lack of trust that could exist with a patient ombudsman as proposed in section 5 of Bill 8." She says, and this is key, "Trust is fragile and hard to restore once lost. Trust is also a core pillar of quality care." We couldn't agree more with those words, Mr. Speaker.

We have a provincial advocate about whom the government stands up and says, "You know what? We have expanded these powers," even though they've tied his hands at the same time, even though they've purposely, with intent, carved off a whole segment of vulnerable children whom he cannot help, which is a non-starter for us.

Then we have the provincial Ombudsman, who has all of the structure, all the administration in play to expand the scope of his responsibilities. Obviously there would be local people connected to the Ombudsman—of course that would happen—but the experience is there and it is true oversight because he is an officer of the Legislature. He doesn't respond to any one party. He has independence. The independence piece is the key piece. It's a key component of ensuring the integrity of that role, of that position, in their responsibilities.

1450

Finally, I think we have to talk about the lack of having a public sector executive cap on salaries. I know that the party opposite, the Liberal government, says that you can't set a number to it. You have to start somewhere. Even a framework: They refuse to even entertain a framework—\$400,000, \$500,000, somewhere in there. They refuse to do that, even though, in our original motion in the last Legislature, we actually included a sector-specific skill-based salary. So if you're a nuclear physicist, you're not going to fall into the regular scope of the broader executive salary cap.

But there's no cap. There's no cap. You can't—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Gee, what do you think an NDP researcher would be worth?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Do you know what I know it isn't? I know it isn't a \$780,000 buyout for the executive of the Pan/Parapan Am Games. I know that's not what it is. If I was the government, I know I wouldn't be writing

contracts where you get more money to get fired than to actually stay and do your job. I know that. Let's start someplace.

Again, just on my theme of missed opportunities with regard to Bill 8, the sunshine list: Everyone makes a big deal about the sunshine list, people who make over \$100,000. But do you know what that sunshine doesn't capture? It doesn't capture the tens of thousands of high-income earners who get all or part of their pay from working for the government. If you were truly interested in peeling back the layers, in opening the doors, in being more transparent and in being more accountable, then you might have looked at this. If you really want to know how the government pays people, you should be including private contractors and those who work for them under the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. That's what should happen, because you want to think about the money that's going out of this place that we don't know about.

As the new finance and Treasury Board critic, I can tell you that it's a full-time job following the money around this place. I think I'm going to find it and then it ends up in another ministry and everyone has taken a little bit of a cut along the way. It's astounding to me that if you were truly interested—and we've raised this issue. We've raised this issue on the IT file, for instance. This government is spending two to three times as much on private sector IT services than they are on supporting and valuing the Ontario public service.

You don't have that money to waste. You don't have \$200 million to waste. If we could find you the savings, we'd put it into dental care—the dental care that you're not cutting, even though 70,000 young children are not going to find access to care.

What I have to say, of course, is that we didn't support this legislation in second reading. We tried to make it stronger at committee. I think I've done my job as an opposition MPP by bringing the voices of children to this place. We should always remember those voices in this House. I know that there's political pressure to push things along, but I wouldn't mind a little courage on the part of the government to do the right thing, because if they showed the courage, they would have our support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent to allow me to deliver my inaugural address during debate on this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Newmarket–Aurora is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to deliver his maiden speech right now. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, as I said, to make my inaugural speech with a touch of trepidation. It's not just that I'm addressing this august body; it's because, and I have to admit that, I'm here in part because of an ice cream cone—a double-scoop chocolate ice cream cone from Cousins Dairy in Aurora.

You see, as a young boy, my father would be taken on a yearly church excursion during the summer. On a hot summer day, they'd board an electric tram in Toronto and rocket north on Yonge Street all the way to Lake Simcoe, where the church would have a grand picnic. On the way home in the evening, they would always stop in Aurora for a nice ice cream cone. Over the years, my father got to know Aurora, fell in love with Aurora, and fell in love with Cousins Dairy's chocolate chip ice cream cones.

Memories stuck with my dad, and when he and my mother were looking for a place to buy a home and settle down when they got married, Aurora was at the top of their list. That they moved to King City, right next door to Aurora, is testament to available housing but also the proximity to that Cousins Dairy.

As an aside, I often shake my head at how advanced our public transportation was in those days, the olden days, when they could board an electrified train deep in Toronto and go all the way north up to Aurora and on to Lake Simcoe, and even change trains and head east and west to all the small communities through the county of York—as it was known then—Schomberg and Nobleton and those sorts of things. I think this is what drives my passion, and our communities' passion, for all-day, two-way electrified GO train service. We're back to the future.

I need to thank all of those who encouraged and supported me as I first entered political life, the political life that led to this chamber.

To my wife, Audrey, I certainly owe a debt of gratitude for her unwavering support and hard work on the campaign trail. It certainly is nice to have someone who believes in you.

To my children, Joshua, Michelle and Emily, who offered unlimited encouragement but, strangely, moved away when it was time to knock on too many doors: I do owe them a thank you.

To friends Ken Whitehurst and former Aurora mayor Phyllis Morris, who incubated and encouraged my political ambition to be a town councillor and, later, an MPP: Thank you.

To an amazing campaign manager, Cathy Gapp, who ran a tremendous campaign, and all of the volunteers, of course—too numerous to mention—I do thank them all.

Finally, to former Liberal leader Lyn McLeod, who first took me aside and told me that she thought I had what it took to be the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora—I said no a few times to Ms. McLeod, but accepting a no is not something our one-time leader does well, so here I am.

There is, of course, another leader that all of us on this side of the aisle owe a large debt to, and I believe, in all earnestness, that Premier Wynne, in my estimation, is the epitome of what leadership is. Her dedication, hard work and focus on positive politics has been an inspiration, especially to the new caucus, which I'm honoured to be a part of.

As for the members on the other side, I'm optimistic about our ability to work together, and I look forward to getting to know you all in the months and years ahead.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I were not to mention my predecessor in Newmarket–Aurora, Frank Klees, and to acknowledge his many years of commitment to public service as an MPP and cabinet minister.

So here I am. Looking back, while growing up, politics was always part of my family's life. Our family motto seemed to be, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."

I, too, have an immigrant story. This one involves my grandparents, my father's parents, who sold everything to buy passage from England to Canada, in search of opportunities and a less class-conscious society.

Landing in Toronto with four children in tow, and an offer of employment in hand, my grandparents Henry and Bertha were optimistic. But they arrived just in time for the Great Depression, and the promised job disappeared. They found themselves without money, without a job, without a home, and with another child on the way. My father was that child. His stories of growing up poor, but in a house filled with love, shaped my life.

Along with this heritage shaping the person I am today, there's also my upbringing in King township. When I was growing up, we had two signs entering King, one coming and one going; they both said the same thing: "Welcome to King City, population 800, growing with Canada." I think that sign was there almost the entire time that I was growing up. The town has grown a bit since then, but it certainly was rural, small-town Ontario when I enjoyed myself there.

1500

One of the great features about King township is that much of it sits right on top of the Oak Ridges moraine. When people really didn't know much about the Oak Ridges moraine, it was part of our core geography studies in both public school and secondary school. In fact, I can remember that Mr. Simpson, my grade 13 geography teacher, had written a textbook about it for universities and was our instructor. So it's no surprise to me that when I was knocking on doors in Newmarket–Aurora, the Oak Ridges moraine was top of mind for people in my riding. They want to make sure that it's protected and preserved. It's one of the reasons that I'm here.

The Oak Ridges moraine played a role in shaping the heritage of Newmarket–Aurora. First Nations, thousands of years ago, travelled the area and hunted the area. Later, when the Europeans arrived, they found the soil to be fantastic, and they cleared the forests and farmed the area and did quite well.

The moraine itself—just a bit of a geography lesson or geology lesson—is a 160-kilometre ridge of sand, silt and gravel deposits extending east to west north of Toronto left behind by retreating glaciers. It currently provides fresh water to over 200,000 people, and it's the headwaters of 65 different river systems, so it's very important. A large portion of the moraine is covered by development, by fields, by roadways and by golf courses. In the coming months and years, you'll hear me speak passionately in support of the Oak Ridges moraine.

Another key building block that shaped the great community of Newmarket–Aurora is the Queen's York

Rangers. The Rangers have a strong connection to both Aurora and Newmarket. They built Yonge Street, along with the city of York—some of the initial infrastructure here. They built Yonge Street from Toronto to Lake Simcoe, and it was the first road in the area, which helped pave the way for settlement. The development of Yonge Street allowed the enraged residents of the recently founded Newmarket and area to march down Yonge to express their anger with the Family Compact during the Upper Canada Rebellion. If they hadn't stopped at a tavern—I think it was in what's known as Hogg's Hollow—as the lore goes, if they hadn't stopped there to wet their whistle and been caught by the British regular forces, things may have been a bit different here. But the fact that they did, the fact that they gathered and they marched down Yonge on Toronto, was enough to rattle the monarchy of the day so that they looked again at what was happening with the Family Compact and there were great changes. It's one of the reasons that, frankly, we're all here.

If we fast-forward a few centuries later, we have the Queen's York Rangers A Squadron located in our community at the John Graves Simcoe Armoury, and I'm honoured to say that my son, Joshua, who has followed our family motto of being part of the solution, is a member of that squadron. As I've witnessed, first as a town councillor—well, really first on a community newspaper in Aurora, later as a town councillor and certainly now as an MPP—our community is not only home to the Oak Ridges moraine and the Queen's York Rangers; it has a vast array of community organizations and events that highlight our heritage and culture and do a lot of good in our community, as do all communities across Ontario.

I'd like to commend the hard work and dedication given by the local volunteers in the community who make these events and clubs possible and keep these traditions alive. Specifically, in my short term as MPP, we've celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Newmarket Car Club, and I'll tell you, when they put on their big festival, they get 1,000 cars from across the GTA to come to Newmarket. These are cars that, when I lift the lids and look at the engines, I actually understand how those things work, compared to automotive technology today.

We celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Aurora Lawn Bowling Club, the 70th anniversary of the Aurora Lions Club, the 50th anniversary of the Aurora Youth Soccer Club, and those are just to name a few. Each weekend is filled with events and celebrations in the riding of Newmarket–Aurora.

I've also been delighted to attend events such as the Caribbean and South Asian Showcase, the Newmarket Jazz Festival, the annual Magna Hoedown, and multiple farmers' markets that display the delicious produce the area has to offer. These are just some of the many events that ensure my weekends are extremely enjoyable and busy. I look forward to attending many more events which celebrate our community's culture and heritage.

Along with attending events, while being MPP I've had the opportunity to participate in multiple transit announcements thanks to my colleague from Vaughan, who's working hard to provide the constituents of York region and Ontario with accessible and efficient transportation to ensure our province is moving forward on transit.

Since our government has been back to work, the East Gwillimbury bus servicing and storage facility has opened. That holds 36 buses indoors and four buses outside. Also, the 404 extension from Green Lane to Ravenshoe Road opened. That removes 22,000 vehicles from local roads each day, which really has had a positive impact on our riding and local roads. And of course, one of the earlier announcements from Metrolinx was the increase of the number of trains heading north at night to make sure that students and those who work past 6 o'clock at night can have GO train service back to their homes in Newmarket and Aurora.

Over the next few years, I look forward to seeing further improvements in York region transit, specifically securing the development of that all-day, two-way electrified GO train service for Newmarket-Aurora, which, frankly, is another reason that the people of my riding put me here.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to tell you a little bit about my riding. I wanted to just talk about my time here at Queen's Park. I've had a few months to settle in and to understand better my responsibilities at Queen's Park, and I'm really eager to get to work and to build on the work that we've started.

We've already seen some results. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, Minister Oraziotti—he and I have sought the input of industry and consumers to pass Bill 15, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates. I was happy to contribute to Bill 15 because valuable protection will be extended to consumers regarding the towing and storage of vehicles.

Continuing my private sector work in consumer protection, it truly is an honour to be able to lend my experience in advocacy to this government, a government which is promoting a fairer society for all Ontarians.

While the amalgamation of consumer services and government services is under way, I'm also working to ensure that our Ontario is not only a fair society, but has a government that is efficient and well-connected. That's why I'm working closely with ministry officials to target key initiatives aimed at developing relationships with our vendors. I'm making sure that small and medium-sized businesses, a powerful engine of our economy, have access to services aimed at growing the economy and building Ontario up. From a personal side, as someone who ran a small company for 25 years, as someone who chaired the Economic Development Advisory Committee in our town of Aurora, which focused on small business, the impact of a government building relationships with smaller businesses can't be understated. It's a very positive move.

Mr. Speaker, along with that important work going on at MGCS, I received the distinct pleasure of being asked to take on an additional PA-ship to the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Like consumer advocacy, reducing poverty and increasing services to vulnerable populations is not only an issue near and dear to my heart, but it's the moral responsibility of any government.

The leadership of Minister Matthews has been pivotal in the achievements that our government has made so far. Tens of thousands of Ontarians have been raised out of poverty, along with an untold number who have been helped to stay above the poverty level.

But there's more work to be done. During my time as resident, councillor and now MPP for my riding, I've heard that poverty is largely a downtown Toronto issue, but let me tell you, that couldn't be farther from the truth. Poverty is pervasive across the entire province, including the towns that I represent. That's why it's a privilege for me to be part of the ongoing consultations that are seeking the input of poverty-reduction-focused groups located all across the province.

Through province-wide discussions with individual and group stakeholders, we're finding out that Ontario has some very interesting and successful areas of social enterprise. It has been one of the most eye-opening experiences that I've had over the past few months, to meet with organizations from across Ontario. Some are big and well-known; others are small and only operating in their small community. But they've all figured out a way of making a difference where it counts. We want to learn from them and see how we can help them deliver greater service and help us be more efficient. It's very important to nurture these successes.

1510

Targeting vulnerable populations like the chronically homeless, persons with disabilities and recent immigrants, Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy is a vital tool to ensure that all Ontarians realize their potential. While outreach and consultations continue, Minister Matthews and her staff are working hard to create networks, both within our government ministries and amongst the many groups that seek to end poverty, and it is rewarding work.

I consider myself a very fortunate individual. I find myself contributing to two very busy ministries that are working for all Ontarians as part of a government that is dedicated to fairness, openness and transparency. That's why I was proud to introduce my private member's bill, Bill 42, which received second reading last week. It will expand democracy in York region, one of the fastest-growing regions in Canada.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the foundational work of both my colleagues from Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges-Markham on that bill, and I'm proud to see their work reintroduced. If passed, Bill 42 will see the regional chair and CEO of York region be no longer an appointed position but an elected one. Bill 42 will make this important office accountable to the

residents of York region, and I'm thankful for the support of members from all parties on moving that through.

Whether I'm working hard to represent my constituents in Newmarket–Aurora or participating in an active government at Queen's Park, I'll continue to devote my energies to the task at hand: building Ontario up one step at a time, whether it be moving transit forward, protecting the Oak Ridges moraine, working hard to alleviate poverty, or protecting our consumers.

I thank you for the opportunity to rise in the House, and I hope it has provided a little insight as to why I stand here today and showcased just a taste of what the wonderful community of Newmarket–Aurora has to offer. As I've discovered, there's a lot more to taste than just an ice cream.

I notice, Mr. Speaker, that I've run out of pages, but there are five minutes left, so I will go back to an earlier version of that speech and just outline some of the issues that Aurora and Newmarket have faced in the past while.

People talk about the demographics of Aurora. Both Aurora and Newmarket are changing organizations. Aurora, when I was a young child, was 2,500 or 2,600 people. Today, 56,000 people call Aurora home and 85,000 people call Newmarket home, and both are growing. The town of Aurora, when I was growing up, was primarily rural, with horse farms and crops; today, the last bit of green space in Aurora is being developed, and the same with Newmarket.

However, both communities have a real focus on the environment, and both are known for the number of active transportation systems they have—we would call them “trails”; they like to call them “active transportation”—that link Toronto all the way to Lake Simcoe. You can walk through our two beautiful communities, and spend a day if you'd like, because in Aurora alone we have over 100 kilometres of trails that loop through the town, and Newmarket is quite similar—some absolutely beautiful things to be done.

One of the other areas of focus besides the environment is on arts and culture development. Both communities spend an awful lot of their time building those institutions. In fact, the town of Aurora, a number of years ago, had a beautiful two-storey facility called the Church Street School. The Church Street School was once the home of Lester Pearson when he was a young boy. The future Prime Minister of Canada went to school in this old building.

There came a time when the historical society didn't know what to do with the building anymore. It had become too expensive for them to keep up, and far too expensive for them to develop. With the help of the town and different layers of government, we managed to develop the Church Street School into a setting that's now known internationally as the Aurora Cultural Centre, which hosts all sorts of arts events, from displays to world-class music.

In fact, what's really nice is to see young, budding artists display their work and to see experienced artists who've just come from a show in New York display their

works, and then the next week there might be a display that the local high school has put on, demonstrating that this is the way to bring a community together and to showcase the depth of talent that Aurora and Newmarket show. Newmarket is going through a similar phase right now. They're looking at one of their old municipal buildings right in the historic downtown core of Newmarket, and looking to develop a similar type of facility. I think it harkens back to the early days of the communities of Newmarket and Aurora.

Newmarket was primarily founded by Quakers who came from the United States seeking a peaceful place to live and to farm, and they found, again, fertile farmland in the Newmarket area. I believe about 200 families originally settled in the area, and Newmarket is now home to some very strong Quaker heritage, which I think has really helped develop the community we see today, those qualities that the Quakers brought with them.

Aurora was a little different. Aurora was, as I said earlier, primarily a farming community, but we were also the railhead north of Toronto, and we had the Fleury plow developed in Aurora. It's an early claim to fame of our community, because the Fleury plow was made out of steel. It was very tough, and it is what broke the prairie sod. We're quite proud to think that because of the technology from Aurora and the manufacturing prowess of our Aurora foundries, we are really behind the expansion of farming across the prairies. You needed a really tough plow to cut through the sod there, and the Fleury plow was the one to get that job done.

So a very varied background to both of the communities, two communities that I am certainly proud to call home and certainly proud to represent in the days ahead.

I'll leave you just with one thought. History plays a real, important part of our community, both Newmarket and Aurora. I've talked about the Quaker heritage and the business background in Aurora, but if you have some time, you must google Blake's Aurora speech. At the same time he was the Prime Minister of Canada and the Prime Minister of Ontario—he gave a speech at the old Aurora armoury that set the foundation for federalism for the years to come. He believed so much in what he spoke about federalism that he had to resign as Prime Minister of Ontario to carry on as Prime Minister of Canada. It's just a very interesting speech that sets the tone of the time.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to deliver my inaugural speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to third reading of Bill 8, but before I do that, I would like to congratulate the member from Newmarket–Aurora on his maiden speech; certainly it's always great to hear a maiden speech, but to learn more about his background and small business experience. I hope he remembers that going forward when the government is bringing in new rules that will affect small

business and that he remembers what it was like when he was actually in business himself, as time marches forward.

Certainly with this time allocation, there is no opportunity for questions and comments, so I'm pleased to use a bit of my time to just comment on the member's speech. Certainly I learned a lot about his family—his wife, Audrey, and kids Joshua, Michelle and Emily—and his background as a councillor, and also who he talked to when he was thinking about getting into politics.

I recall back some 13 years ago when I did my maiden speech in June 2001. I think it was before there was actually an air conditioning system that worked well in this place, so my big concern was, "Do I buckle up my jacket, or do I unbuckle it?" and would the sweat be running down my face. I was a little nervous making the inaugural speech. He seems much more relaxed than I remember being at the time.

He mentioned that he spoke with Lyn McLeod, a former Liberal leader, about the decision to run. I actually called a Liberal member as well, Murray Gaunt, who is no longer with us, but was a long-time Liberal member for the Wingham area. He happened to be a guest at our lodge for many years, so I knew him quite well. I knew that he had a young family and had also been an MPP, so I thought he would be a good guy to talk to and find out what the job really involved. I'm here now, so obviously he didn't tell me not to run.

1520

Ms. Catherine Fife: He didn't talk you out of it.

Mr. Norm Miller: No.

I was pleased to do the eulogy for Mr. Gaunt when the time came here at Queen's Park and to attend his funeral, actually, as well.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora mentioned working together. Well, I hope he talks to some of his members on his side of the Legislature, too, about that.

My birth certificate actually says Newmarket on it, and we lived in Aurora at the time. It's before any of my memory, mind you, because I think I was one when we moved away to Montreal and then finally, of course, we found the best place to live, which was Parry Sound–Muskoka. Actually, my father was teaching at St. Andrew's College for four years at that time. He spoke very fondly of the good times at St. Andrew's and wanted to tell me how much he enjoyed it there.

I would also like to comment on Bill 42—which also relates to what's going on in Muskoka right now—your bill that would, I gather, make for an elected district chair, elected by all the people. We're actually just having a race going on in Muskoka. We still have a system in Muskoka where it is just those elected councillors and mayors on the district government who pick the new chair. There are, I think, at least four people running this time, so it's fairly contested. But it is an interesting question: Should all of the people in the community be able to vote for the chair? I think it's hard to argue against that, really. So that's a good bill that the member has brought forward.

Having said all of that, I would also like to segue into talking about Bill 8, because the first thing I'm going to talk about with Bill 8 has to do with ambulance services and the Auditor General. Of course, he did pay a compliment to the former member for Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Frank Klees, who subbed in on the public accounts committee for a couple of years and was probably the key person for the PC Party, in terms of the Ornge air ambulance hearings that went on. That's certainly directly related to Bill 8, which, of course, is what we're talking about here today.

I thank the Speaker for giving me some room to not directly speak to Bill 8, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts. We're speaking to third reading on this. As the government has done with most of its bills, it is time-allocated, meaning we only have two hours total time to debate third reading, and there's no questions and comments.

I would like to talk about the section that deals with ambulances. I'll note, as I mentioned, that I was pleased to see the summary report from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on the Ornge air ambulance and related services get reported to the Legislature in October. I'm pleased that that happened because there were a couple of years of work and there were many, many areas of concern that were raised by that report. Some of them are answered partially, I would say, in this Bill 8—not completely.

One that is not completely answered, I would say, has to do with what was learned from the investigation into Ornge air ambulance and the work of the Auditor General and how the current rules make it harder for the auditor to do her job. One of the findings of the committee to do with the Office of the Auditor General was:

"The Auditor General was unable to obtain all necessary information in the course of the 2011-12 Ornge audit. The auditor was refused access to the records of any of the other entities, which Ornge had contracted with to provide, among other things, aviation, aircraft maintenance, pilot management, accounting and payroll processing services. Ornge's management and board advised the Auditor General that this was because the ministry was not funding the other entities directly or indirectly (under the Auditor General Act the auditor is generally allowed access only to organizations funded by the provincial government)."

I'm disappointed that this bill does not incorporate into it powers to allow the Auditor General to follow the public dollars no matter where they are.

Last session, I introduced and debated a bill—I believe it was Bill 190—to do just that, and I have introduced a private member's bill, Bill 25, which is the Auditor General Amendment Act, which would allow the auditor to follow the public dollars no matter where they happen to go. I would suggest to the government that they're welcome to borrow that private member's bill, if they wish, in some future government bill, because I

think it is a good thing to do, and I know that the auditor absolutely supports it.

To give a little background, the reason that bill is needed is what we found with the Ornge air ambulance study at the public accounts committee. With Ornge air ambulance in particular, the creating of for-profit subsidiary companies through Ornge Global proved to be a stonewall to the special investigation and provincial oversight.

Currently, when conducting audits, third-party service providers and indirect recipients of public funds are an area which the provincial auditor does not have access to. Some entities falling into these categories may comply with requests of the audit but could choose to provide only selected information. When this is the case, it is difficult to get a clear picture of where the funds are going.

One such example is with the recent investigation into the costs of the Mississauga power plant cancellation. The proponent, Greenfield South Power Corp., who was under contract to build the plant, submitted only select financial information for the investigation. The company, as a third-party recipient of funds, could not be compelled to comply with such requests from the Auditor General.

The auditor has also been recently asked to look into winter road maintenance, and again, with winter road maintenance, there could be problems getting all the information because there are private contractors that are doing the maintenance. That's an area that the auditor is shortly going to report on. Certainly, this evening, when we're talking about Bill 31, I'll have an opportunity to talk a bit more about winter road maintenance.

The limitation stretches to many areas where public bodies contract out service delivery to private and for-profit third-party organizations. Specific areas where this information would be useful include details on profit margins, number of employees, and salaries paid to senior management.

Third parties can also include organizations such as charities and non-profit groups. There's no doubt in my mind that this lack of information would make future audits less telling and therefore less useful.

It's my feeling that the auditor needs the correct tools to do the job. In this case, the current legislation can be improved to allow the auditor to follow the dollars. There are other jurisdictions that do allow this: Manitoba, Nova Scotia and British Columbia all have that legislation; New Brunswick, I believe, has tabled legislation. I have tabled Bill 25, and I hope the government will use Bill 25, or change it if necessary, to give the auditor the powers that she needs to be able to do the work that is so important. It has been learned, from looking at Ornge air ambulance, that there needs to be a lot more oversight.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 8, of course, has many different schedules. One of them that I've been talking about is schedule 2, which is to do with ambulance. I believe you were in the chair last time I had the opportunity to speak about the need in my riding for ambulance services in the more remote parts of the riding, that being in the Port Loring/Argyle area, which you're very familiar with.

I was recently trying to get an update on what's happening up there, so my office contacted the director of emergency services in Parry Sound, Mr. David Thompson, to get an update, because there has been a pilot project reported on that's being tried out in the community—it sounds like a good idea, and I just hope that they're able to make it permanent—and that's the community paramedicine program, which I believe is going until June. That has an ambulance station in Port Loring, with two paramedics, with partial coverage, but it also does other things, including health education and local health promotion. It works with the nursing station, and it also provides visits in the home and preventive care.

1530

The operational review for the area is ongoing, and there is to be a report in mid-January. I think it's an improvement over the fall, when I attended the public meeting. The question is how to make the coverage for an ambulance service permanent in the area.

It is a challenge because of the low volume of calls and the significant—big geography, is what I would call it. That's also the reason why it absolutely needs an ambulance in that area, because it's at least an hour from the closest hospital, meaning at least a two-hour ambulance ride. So I'm very much supportive of there being an ambulance station there permanently.

Mr. Speaker, in the few minutes that I have left, I would also like to talk about the section—I have to find the right schedule here—oh, yes, schedule 6, which makes amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

This came about, I believe, because of the work to do with the gas plant committee and the deleted emails and all that was going on. Now they're trying to correct that, although it's interesting that the two key witnesses, Peter Faist and Laura Miller, have still not come before the Legislature. In fact, I believe those people have left the province. I think that's something that needs to be addressed.

As well, we've been learning recently about new computer systems—talking about transparency—for the Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works. It has been a bit of a mess. It has been reported that there have been all kinds of problems with the system not providing the correct amounts. The government says it's a minor glitch, but it doesn't appear to be that, based on the number of people reporting about it.

I can tell you I've had anonymous calls to my constituency office from people who work with the system, and what I'm hearing on the ground is that there was \$250 million spent on this new computer program; I believe it's called SAMS. What the people who are using it are telling my office is that it's supposed to save time and allow more time to deal with the recipients. In fact, the opposite is the case: It takes 10 times longer to use it. What used to be six clicks is now 100 clicks. The system is not integrated, and on and on it goes.

I believe that the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who is going to be speaking next, has said that our party has requested that this go before one of the standing committees of the Legislature, and the government is, so far, refusing to do this.

I know the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound wants to speak and would love to have at least the 17 minutes that are left, so I will wrap up now and thank the Speaker and the House for the opportunity to speak to Bill 8 today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague Norm Miller. He has probably said most of what needs to be said, but I'll try to take it from here and add a few other points.

Before I start, though, I would like to say [*remarks in Ukrainian*] to the member from Etobicoke Centre. Happy birthday, Yvan Baker.

Speaker, I spoke of this extensively at second reading, and I'm going to try to recap a fair bit of that, because I only have 17 minutes; I think I had an hour that day.

But nothing has really changed from the perspective of—this is a time allocation bill. At the end of the day, it's the height of—I'm not going to say the word, because I know that's inappropriate and not acceptable, but there's a lot in this bill that says one thing and they're going to do the other. That's just not acceptable—even to the point of the title of the bill—talking about accountability and transparency, and then not allowing things like Laura Miller and Peter Faist to be called in front of this House after a billion-dollar gas scandal. They talk about quite a few things—and I'm going to really try to avoid that word, because it is the exact opposite of what they are doing most of the time.

I'm going to start, though, by saying there are points of the bill that I believe—we have tried to show some support, we've tried to take amendments, and there are certain pieces in here that I believe, the principle of them, we can support. Those are things like the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; things like amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act so the Speaker will have the ability to have us post our travel; amendments to the Lobbyists Registration Act to ensure that we know what's going on with lobbyists and who is lobbying the government; and amendments to the Ombudsman Act. Most of these are the kind of motherhood-and-apple-pie type of thought processes. Again, giving the Ombudsman the ability to check and to verify are all admirable, and I think we're relatively supportive.

The challenge comes when we always want to turn to someone else. If there were truly a government that was accountable and transparent, why would we need all these separate silos and these people to do so much other investigations? If they were truly being accountable to the people as cabinet ministers and as that ministry, you would think we would be there.

Amendments to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act: Again, the ability for the advocate to come in—I met with him when I had the critic role for children and youth. I think he does a lot of great work and is definitely there to advocate on behalf of the children. It's good but, again, we want to be sure that we're not just creating other silos that are not going to be effective and, at the end of the day, are spending time getting to the needs of the people as opposed to studying and doing more consultations.

Amendments to the Public Sector Expenses Review Act I've already talked about.

So there are some things in there that I think are at the highest level and, in principle, I think we can agree with, but there are also some big challenges in there that I think we have to be looking at. Whistle-blower legislation is one of them, with the Ambulance Act. It certainly is great, but my former colleague Frank Klees from Newmarket–Aurora tried to bring in some people who were actually willing to be whistle-blowers, to step up and do the right thing even though their careers might be in jeopardy, because they were truly concerned. At the end of the day, those people really did not get heard by this Liberal government. They basically just said, “We know what we're doing; we're moving forward.” Again, the height of saying one thing and doing another came shining through in that example.

Just recently we've had a colossal nightmare with the SAMS program under the Minister of Community and Social Services. We've had a lot of front-line people coming through my office as the critic and, certainly, through those of my colleagues in the PCs. I trust the NDP are hearing it as well. There are lots of concerns behind the scenes with this system: the lack of training and the stress they're encountering. We've called to say, “Bring them to committee; bring those front-line people so that we can truly get to the bottom of what the glitches were and what they are so we can improve it.” At the end of the day, those people not getting their cheques, underpayments, overpayments—we've heard of both—have to be rectified.

Just recently my colleague Bob Bailey from Sarnia brought an example of someone in his riding who, on October 29, applied to be able to have the application process and was denied. Sadly, this person has HIV and needs medication. How do you tell someone that, “No; we're going to deny you going through the process because we're taking training on a new system”? That's a person's life that we put in jeopardy. Luckily, Bob and his staff worked very diligently and found a work-around to be able to help this person out. At the end of the day, the government should be responsible for that. They should have taken steps to ensure that those types of things wouldn't happen. We keep hearing, “They're just minor glitches.” Minor glitches they're not if it's a life-saving medication. Telling you that you cannot even apply to the process is totally unacceptable.

One of the schedules is on public sector executive compensation. The other day—it was interesting—I

raised a question about the CCACs and the administrative salaries, and both the minister and the Treasury Board president kind of tried to make fun of me, that I didn't know what I was doing. They said, "It's already in Bill 8. Why aren't you just agreeing to it?" There are words in there that say you "can limit" compensation. "Can limit" and actually doing something about it are two totally different things. Accountability is actually about stepping up and not using rhetoric and lofty words. It's actually taking a stand and saying, "This is unacceptable. We are going to do something about it." We need to ensure that accountability is truly about action and not just rhetoric and words. That's one that, again, I found quite—I keep wanting to say that word, but it's saying one thing and doing the other. They want to say they're doing all the right things, they want people to read the 30-second headline and feel that everything's rosy in this world, but that's just not the way it is.

The executive salary cap in Bill 8 talks about limiting, but really what it does is, it does not impose a salary cap; it says, "We can," "We shall," "We're able to." At the end of the day, what we really want is that we are definitively taking action.

1540

The minister's own parliamentary assistant has said, "I did not suggest that [this bill imposes caps on executive compensation]" but "the bill provides the government with the ability to impose those [hard] caps." The ability to and saying you will not, or "I'm going to stop," are two totally different things, Mr. Speaker. Again, I find this in many cases in regard to a lot of the things in my three years here: The government suggests that we can do better, we should do better. We hear this. I believe the Premier, just last week, used words like that: "I'm sad that it isn't better; it wasn't implemented better." Tell that to the person who does not get their cheque and can't pay their hydro, they can't pay their rent, and the stress and duress that puts them under. Saying, "I can't," and then sloughing it off as just a minor, little glitch on an important system such as that just is not acceptable.

We too often see this government saying one thing and doing another. At the end of the day, this bill, even the wording of this bill, "accountability and transparency"—why will they not allow us to bring people forward to ensure that the things that they've messed up in the past can never happen again?

Minister Matthews said the salary caps show, "We are serious about restoring trust in government." If it wasn't for Ornge, eHealth, gas plants, MaRS, recently the \$500-million cut from the education budget, would they have to? Why would we not believe, if we didn't have all these? We might be able to stand in this House and say, "Yes, we know what you're saying, but there's just too much of a track record here." What I see is the same old, same old. When I came in these doors under Premier Dalton McGuinty, we heard a lot of the same rhetoric: "This won't happen; it's not happening," and they denied it. Then we have Premier Wynne, and I was really hoping for a change. But at the end of the day, I don't see

anything different, really. Bringing in a bill and using rhetoric to say that we're addressing all of these concerns is only credible if you truly, actually, are going to step up to the plate and do it.

I believe my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London said it earlier: Ethics cannot be legislated. It's one thing to put it on paper so people know that it's there, but at the end of the day, it's the action that's really about ethics, integrity and doing the right thing, doing the honourable thing. The Liberals have put accountability measures in place before and still—I repeat again—Ontarians have experienced eHealth, Ornge and gas plant scandals. It's just not enough to put it in words when you don't stand behind those.

Again, I'm going to give credit to my colleague, Jeff Yurek, from Elgin–Middlesex–London. I think in his short presentation earlier he used, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." That's a sad statement, Mr. Speaker, because it's what we're seeing in a lot of cases. After 11 years, it's kind of that mentality of, "We know what we're doing. We know better than you." They shut down Bill 10. They used time allocation to shut down Bill 10, something that's going to impact children across this province. Garfield Dunlop, my colleague from Simcoe North, stood in this House and asked for more time to travel the province and really hear first-hand feedback from the people of Ontario because we were concerned that where they were going was not right, that we could make actual improvements, particularly if we actually reached out and listened to the people at the front lines and ensured that democracy truly was in place, where we listen to those who give us the privilege of representing them. They denied that. They time-allocated it. That, to me, shows an arrogance. That shows, again, that "absolute power corrupts absolutely" may just be creeping in. I believe most large organizations, certainly governments, have fallen—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I understand the latitude granted to a debater during a debate such as this, but the member has returned repeatedly to an allegation using a word that is normally out of bounds in the Legislature regarding the government's conduct. I would ask the Speaker to ensure that standing order 23(h), which refrains the member from making an allegation, or 23(i), from imputing motive, be more strictly enforced. Perhaps the member could take this into his comments as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would remind all members of the House that the debate has to be relevant to the bill; it's important that we're talking about the bill that has been called for debate. I remind the member about temperate language and ensuring that his language conforms to what is acceptable to other members of the House.

I return to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who has the floor.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, being a relatively new member of the Legislature and not

knowing all the technicalities at this point—certainly I don't know the standing orders as well as some of my other colleagues in the House.

There are so many things that this government does in an illegal context, in a less-than-appropriate context—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You have to stand up and say “withdraw.”

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw—my apologies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm struggling for words, because a lot of their actions certainly lead us down a path—but what I would like, and I don't know if this is appropriate or not, because I've never had this happen to me before: May I ask the member who drew the point of order to share the word with me that I'm actually supposed to withdraw, because I don't know which word he's talking about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's no mechanism to allow back and forth at this point. The order of the House is clear: There are no questions and comments.

You've got the floor. I asked you to withdraw the unparliamentary comment; you did. You have the floor.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize. Again, I'm not really certain why the Liberal government is concerned about what I'm saying. If it's the truth, then it may hurt, at the end of the day.

I'm going to continue on. I'm trying to use language that shows the people both listening at home and here in the House where we have concerns with this bill. I'm trying sometimes to use quotations that aren't necessarily mine, but they're general quotations out there, and I'm just trying to paint a little bit of a picture.

The other one that I find very interesting is the compensation framework. I find it interesting that, again, this bill comes in after the fact of Ornge, where Chris Mazza was paid \$9.3 million. It's very interesting how that was acceptable and fine, and they didn't ever really apologize or even want to talk about it, and now, amazingly, they want to start limiting that.

They talk about auditing organizations, and yet, if we go back to that Ornge example, there were companies that we can't even find recorded. We can't find a record so that we can go back and have a true audit to show just what may or may not have been done appropriately. So I find it, again, a little bit interesting that they're bringing out this legislation, and yet there are two very distinct examples of how that happened.

Again, if we just think of the words “accountability” and “transparency,” this government had—and has still, I believe—in place two OPP investigations into the gas plant scandals. That's unprecedented in this province's history, so it's a little bit fresh that this government wants to bring in legislation and suggest that it's actually transparent and accountable.

You can't just sit there and pretend that legislation is going to change the rules. Yes, legislation plays an abso-

lute role in this, but, as I alluded to earlier, ethics cannot be legislated. You need stringent accountability measures, and you need to see the action that follows those accountability measures if we're truly going to believe that a government is sincere and not just utilizing a rhetoric of empty words.

I'm going to return again to how many of my colleagues in this House asked numerous times for Laura Miller and Peter Faist to be able to be called in front of committee, to be able to have a discussion. They're the two people who we believe know the most about—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has the floor. I would ask the government members to come to order so that I can hear.

The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must have hit a sore point that they're either embarrassed of, or they know I'm getting pretty close to the jugular, because they're really raising a lot of concerns about this. If they would have just let Laura Miller and Peter Faist come in front of committee to share how those emails got deleted—again, the first time that we believe it probably has ever happened, or at least the first time that we've ever been able to catch them in that act—I find it very strange.

Again, last week I asked about SAMS, that system that's supposed to be serving our most vulnerable. We want to make sure that we understand why there are so many glitches, why people aren't getting their payments or are getting overpayments or underpayments—at the end of the day, it's really impacting them significantly—so that they could come in front of committee and truly give us the front-line perspective, so that we have the people who know the most about the system and we can ensure that we can put some situations in place to prevent this from ever happening again.

1550

My biggest fear right now is that they probably haven't done a whole lot to correct it. Will it happen again next month? It raises questions about who's going to pay for these supposed little glitches. Is it going to be IBM, the company that they bought this off the shelf from, or is it going to be you and I, the taxpayers out there listening?

The other question I would raise: If they really want to be transparent and accountable, what's this going to cost us at the end of the day in all of the time and energy of the staffers that are working on this out there, and what aren't they focusing their energies on because they're fixing yet another mess-up out there?

At the end of the day, this is one of those pieces of legislation again. The title sounds very appropriate, but you really need to look back, even over my three years here—scandal after scandal after scandal, yet nobody has really lost their job over it. No one has actually lost a cabinet position from it. In fact, some have actually, you might suggest, been given bonuses or even—

Interjections: Promotions.

Mr. Bill Walker: —promotions, which is absolutely deplorable when you think of the magnitude of these things. There are people going without front-line services because of the waste of this government.

We want to see accountability. We want to see transparency. We, the PCs, will hold this government to account at every opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The time for this debate is up. Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 18, 2014, I am now required to put the question: Ms. Matthews has moved third reading of Bill 8, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell—unless I receive a deferral notice.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the chief government whip asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

INVASIVE SPECIES ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LES ESPÈCES ENVAHISSANTES

Mr. Mauro moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species / Projet de loi 37, Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I look to the minister to lead off the debate. Minister?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'll begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Burlington. I'm pleased to rise in the House to move second reading of Bill 37, the proposed Invasive Species Act. Our government first introduced the proposed invasive species legislation in the last session and reintroduced it last month. We remain committed to addressing this serious threat to our environment and our economy.

Ontario's natural resources provide a significant source of jobs and economic benefit for our province. It's one of the foundations of our prosperity, and it's fundamental to our quality of life. We must take stronger action to address the threats that invasive species pose.

With the proposed legislation, our government is showing leadership on this important issue. Ontario's location on the Great Lakes and our extensive trade links put us at greater risk than many other provinces. More invasive species have become established in Ontario than any other Canadian jurisdiction.

Climate change puts stress on ecosystems, making them more vulnerable to threats from invasive species. We need to act so that future generations will continue benefitting from Ontario's rich natural legacy.

Managing invasive species has always been a shared responsibility across all levels of government with industry, with environmental groups and with the public. Currently more than 20 provincial and federal acts are used in Ontario to respond to invasive species threats.

For example, the Canada Shipping Act, federal legislation, manages the discharge of ballast water; the Plant Diseases Act, which is provincial, bans the transport and sale of diseased plants, which could include an invasive insect or pathogen; and the Public Lands Act, which is provincial, allows landowners to remove some invasive plants from their shorelines.

None of these laws was designed specifically to address invasive species. If passed, the Invasive Species Act would be the first stand-alone legislation of its kind in Canada. It would complement the role of the federal government in managing invasive species, and it would promote shared accountability for managing invasive species.

In 2012, a number of ministries worked together to develop the Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan. The plan identified obstacles to preventing, responding to and managing invasive species. In 2013, my ministry issued a discussion paper that identified gaps in legislation that addresses invasive species. The comments we received expressed support for stronger laws to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species. In February 2014, the then Minister of Natural Resources introduced the proposed Invasive Species Act. At that time, the ministry consulted with the public through an Environmental Registry posting. Once again, we received generally positive comments from stakeholders.

Bill 37 would provide the province with better tools to prevent, control, monitor and eradicate invasive species. It would help by providing the powers to intervene earlier to help prevent invasive species from becoming established. It would give Ontario the tools to ban activities such as possessing and transporting certain invasive species. It would allow the government to enable rapid response actions to stop an invasive species from spreading. And when needed, it would help promote compliance through modernized inspection and enforcement measures. The proposed legislation uses a risk-based approach that considers the full range of threats, costs and benefits to the environment, society and the economy.

A broad range of stakeholders have expressed strong support for further action to address invasive species. These stakeholders include municipalities, conservation groups and industry. They recognize the need for stronger action to manage this threat to Ontario's economy and natural environment.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is the largest conservation organization in the province. It represents outdoors recreation enthusiasts who could be

dramatically impacted by invasive species. This is what the federation executive director, Angelo Lombardo, says about the proposed legislation: "I am pleased the Ontario government has reintroduced the Invasive Species Act, a positive step in the fight against invasive species.... The sale, movement and importation of invasive species in Ontario are serious concerns." The legislation being reintroduced by the province "will provide the minister with the much-needed tools to immediately react when a new species or threat is identified."

The Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie coordinates efforts among stakeholders to prevent, detect, respond to and control invasive species. Dilhari Fernando, executive director of the Invasive Species Centre, has this to say about Bill 37: "The proposed legislation is welcome and timely, and would help to set clear priorities and identify those invasive species that are posing the highest risk to Ontario's environment, economy and social values."

This initiative would also reinforce the importance of all stakeholders working together toward common objectives that would see invasive species being addressed in classrooms, boardrooms and at the community level.

Speaker, many of my colleagues in this House from across the province have become familiar with the problems invasive species cause in their own communities. Zebra mussels are a menace to municipal water systems, clogging intake pipes and costing the province between \$75 million and \$91 million each year to manage. Phragmites, the European common reed, is damaging beaches, and insects such as the Asian longhorned beetle threaten the health of our forests.

Also, there is the threat of species that are not currently in Ontario but may spread into our province. In northern Ontario, we face the risk of invasive pests such as the mountain pine beetle. This beetle has killed about half the total volume of commercial lodgepole pine in British Columbia. It has moved east to Alberta, where it is affecting and reproducing in Jack pine. In 2013, the infestation was within 50 kilometres of the Saskatchewan border, and it's poised to continue to move further east. Ontario's forest industry supports about 170,000 jobs in 240 communities, so this threat is indeed significant.

1600

Asian carp pose another very serious threat. I know that this is an issue of interest to the Speaker. These invasive fish have overwhelmed some river systems in the United States. They now make up more than 95% of the fish by weight in some areas. Recreational fishing contributes about \$2.2 billion to Ontario's economy and attracts tourists from all around the world. Asian carp could devastate our commercial fishing industry and cost tourism jobs related to recreational fishing.

Invasive species are also a quality-of-life issue. Fishing and hunting are fundamental to the traditions of First Nations and many others in Ontario. Ontarians value our natural environment, and invasive species are a threat to the bounty of our natural areas and all our communities. A few examples: The Asian longhorn

beetle attacks hardwood trees, including all species of our iconic Canadian maple tree. The emerald ash borer may spread across the entire range of ash, causing widespread tree mortality. Water chestnut floats on the surface of the water. It forms dense clusters with sharp barbs, making swimming and boating more difficult. The sap of the giant hogweed can burn skin, causing blisters and scarring.

Once invasive species are introduced into the wild with no natural predators, they can and do, in some instances, spread quickly. Invasive species often out-compete domestic species for food, and they can destroy the habitat of native species. Invasive species are the second-largest threat to species at risk in Ontario. They are a leading cause of extinction of species globally. Two Ontario examples that I've mentioned already that bear repeating: Invasive phragmites releases toxins from the roots into the soil to harm and kill surrounding plants. It degrades habitat and decreases food supplies for native wildlife, including several species at risk. The invasive dog-strangling vine impacts the reproduction of the monarch butterfly, which is a species at risk. The butterfly lays their eggs on the plant, but the larvae are unable to complete their lifecycle and do not survive.

If passed, this proposed legislation would broaden the actions we can take in combatting invasive species. To manage invasive species most effectively, we must find them early and we must respond quickly because early detection and action are the most cost-effective approach, as we've seen with the zebra mussel. Finding new invasive species before they spread widely or become established allows us to try to eliminate populations as soon as possible. If it's not possible to eliminate the invaders, early response could make control measures more effective and help us to reduce our costs.

Our proposed legislation would allow the government to make regulations to list invasive species and carriers of invasive species that pose a threat. Listed invasive species would be categorized as either a moderate or significant threat to the natural environment in Ontario. Importing, releasing, possessing, transporting and other actions involving an invasive species could then be banned. Examples: If a supply of wood were found to be infested with an invasive beetle, we could prevent it from being moved from one part of the province to another. Ontario could prohibit the entry of Asian carp into the province unless they were already eviscerated. The proposed act recognizes that there may be legitimate reasons, however, for possessing an invasive species, such as for research and education, and it does allow for exemptions.

No invasive species are listed in Bill 37. The proposed act would enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations to list the invasive species and carriers of invasive species that would be subject to the act. The proposed act would provide the minister with the authority to temporarily designate a significant-threat invasive species where the threat posed requires immediate action.

If the act is passed, extensive public consultation would occur before any species would be listed in the

regulations. Consultation would include posting proposed regulatory conditions and associated information on the environmental and regulatory registries so the public and stakeholders could review and provide their comments. Any proposed regulations regarding any invasive species would be based on risk assessments that consider the environmental, social and economic impacts. Stakeholders, including industry, would have an opportunity to review and comment on any proposed regulations before they are made or enforced.

Early detection of invasive species is key to managing them effectively. The proposed act would better enable inspection activity to help protect Ontario from invasive species where necessary.

Enforcement measures strengthen protection. In 2005—and this is important to note; we have been active on this file for some time—rules were put in place banning the transport and possession of several live invasive species, including Asian carp. Since then, enforcement officers have seized more than 40,000 pounds of Asian carp that were destined for Ontario markets. Bill 37 includes provisions allowing for strong penalties, and enforcement powers to investigate violations. If a high-risk species such as Asian carp were found in Ontario, the proposed legislation would enable rapid response actions, such as working with partners on control and eradication efforts.

Under Bill 37, there are provisions to hold those responsible accountable for the costs of control and eradication, through strong penalties and cost recovery.

Penalties are essential to ensuring effective implementation of any act. There would be a maximum fine of \$250,000 for individuals, plus possible imprisonment for up to one year. Maximum fines for corporations would be \$1 million. The penalties are aimed at providing adequate deterrents to potential violators. Fines may multiply in the case of multiple specimens or species. Fines may also be increased by the amount of monetary benefit resulting from the offence.

In addition to these penalties, upon conviction, a court may make other orders. Such orders could include remedying the harm to the natural environment that resulted from the offence.

In closing, I would like to share with the House two more supportive quotes from our stakeholders. Ducks Unlimited Canada is a leader in wetland conservation. They partner with government, industry, non-profit organizations and landowners to conserve wetlands that are critical to waterfowl, wildlife and to the environment.

Lynette Mader, manager of provincial operations for Ducks Unlimited Canada, says the following about Bill 37: “We are pleased the invasive species legislation is being reintroduced. Invasive species are a serious threat to the biodiversity of Ontario’s wetlands and waterfowl habitat. This is an important step forward in the prevention and control of risks posed by non-native plants and animal species.”

Environmental Defence is a Canadian organization that works to protect Canadians’ environment and human

health. Nancy Goucher, water program manager for Environmental Defence, supports the proposed legislation. This is what she had to say about it: “Invasive species like Asian carp are a real threat to the Great Lakes ecosystem and its fishing, boating and tourism economies. We applaud the reintroduction of the Invasive Species Act, which would allow the province to take a more proactive role in stopping new invasive species from taking hold in Ontario, and would enable the government to take action to eradicate invasive species that have become established.”

These are just two of the many stakeholders who agree that we need the proposed legislation.

These invasive species impact the lives of every Ontarian. You don’t have to be an angler or a forester to appreciate our rich natural resources. Invasive species have the potential to damage our beaches. They could decimate the urban tree canopy and devastate our forestry industry. The challenge of addressing invasive species will require all the tools that we can provide. The proposed Invasive Species Act would provide a stronger legislative framework to support the prevention, early detection, rapid response and eradication of invasive species in the province.

I am confident that all members will agree that the problem of invasive species warrants a strong action, and I would encourage them to support Bill 37.

Speaker, I thank you for your time, and I will yield the floor to my parliamentary assistant from Burlington to continue the remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m pleased to recognize the member for Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to allow me to deliver my inaugural address during debate on this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Burlington is seeking unanimous consent to deliver her maiden, or inaugural, speech in this House. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Burlington.

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Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise and join the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry in speaking in support of Bill 37, the proposed Invasive Species Act. This proposed legislation would address a serious threat to our province. Indeed, close to my home in the riding of Burlington, the Cootes to Escarpment is the perfect example, a precious tract of land that contains more indigenous species than any other area of Canada, a number of them species at risk. Bill 37 will protect areas like the Cootes to Escarpment.

Invasive species cause significant damage to the natural environment, which results in significant ecological, economic and social costs, as the minister outlined. This is the case within Ontario, across Canada and internationally. Invasive species move into ecosystems and take over, killing or crowding out some native species. Inva-

sive species disrupt food webs, degrade habitat, introduce parasites and disease, and lead to species becoming at risk. Globally, only habitat loss is a bigger threat to biodiversity.

Mr. Speaker, on a global basis, invasive species costs are estimated to be \$1.4 trillion. That's the equivalent of 5% of the global GDP and seven times the cost of natural disasters. Industries like fishing, hunting, forestry, tourism and agriculture can all be negatively affected by invasive species. In the Great Lakes basin, invasive species foul water intakes, reduce the value of commercial and recreational fisheries and reduce property values. Every year, invasive plants cost the agriculture and forest industries in Canada about \$7.3 billion.

All invasive species pose some risk; however, some species pose a bigger threat than others. The members of this Legislature will be familiar with the Asian carp, which have damaged the ecosystems of many American lakes and rivers. There are actually four species of Asian carp: bighead, silver, grass and black carp. Our greatest concerns are bighead and silver carp, which have spread the most aggressively in the United States. They are considered one of the greatest threats to our Great Lakes.

Asian carp are voracious consumers. They eat up to 20% of their body weight each day. Everywhere they go, they eat the food supply that native fish depend on, and they crowd native species out of their habitat. The decline of native fish species could damage sport and commercial fishing right here in Ontario. Currently, there are no established populations—thank goodness—of Asian carp in Ontario waters. Preventing Asian carp from spreading in the Great Lakes is the best way to prevent harm to Ontario's native fish species.

Another species that has not yet entered Ontario is the mountain pine beetle. In British Columbia, it has destroyed millions of hectares of pine trees. Reports have predicted that climate change, a major underlying cause of the proliferation of invasive species, may allow the beetles to spread north and east. The cost of fighting the mountain pine beetle is staggering. Since 2001, the BC government has spent close to a billion dollars fighting this one insect.

Invasive plants may not be as well known, but they are also a serious threat. One of them, hydrilla, is considered one of the world's worst aquatic invaders. It can grow up to 2.5 centimetres a day, resulting in extremely dense growth that impacts boaters and swimmers. Hydrilla has not yet been detected in Canada, but it has spread rapidly throughout the United States. It is highly adaptable and thrives in many different kinds of aquatic environments.

Asian carp, the mountain pine beetle and hydrilla aren't yet established in Ontario, as I mentioned, but we are managing many invasive species that have become established here.

Some invasive species can be a threat to human health. One example is the giant hogweed, a plant introduced from Asia. Its toxic sap can cause painful burning blisters on the skin when exposed to sunlight. In addition to that threat, this plant can spread readily and shade out native plants, which can have an impact on our biodiversity.

Another invasive species that is already established in Ontario is the round goby. It is a small, bottom-dwelling fish that feeds aggressively on fish eggs, larvae and other small organisms found on lake and river bottoms. In less than a decade, the round goby has spread through all five of our Great Lakes and begun to invade inland waters. The round goby's aggressive eating habits and ability to spawn several times each season have helped them multiply and spread quickly. In fact, in some areas, the fish has reached densities of more than 100 fish per square metre. Round goby have reduced populations of sport fish and threaten several species at risk in our Great Lakes basin.

There is no question that the threat of invasive species is real and significant.

Managing the threat of invasive species is challenging and complex. It requires a coordinated approach. Indeed, managing invasive species has always been a collaborative effort across all levels of government as well as with industry, environmental groups and the public.

Ontario plans to continue to collaborate with all of those involved in invasive species management, including the federal government, which has an important national role to play in invasive species management. Indeed, I want to be clear: Our proposed Invasive Species Act is intended to complement the role of the federal government, not duplicate or take over their responsibility. The proposed Invasive Species Act will enable Ontario to use its own framework to determine an appropriate course of action.

Preventing invasive species from arriving and becoming established in Ontario is critical in our fight against this growing threat. Evidence has shown that the costs of preventing invasive species from becoming established through taking immediate action are generally much lower than the costs of controlling an established invasive species. Like so many things, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

We know that there may be many circumstances that arise where immediate and urgent action is required to eliminate or reduce the spread of an invasive species. This could happen if a new invasive species is found in Ontario or an existing invasive species is found in a new area of the province. The proposed legislation will help by allowing the government to intervene earlier and enable rapid response actions. This could include working with partners to stop an invasive species from spreading: for example, by preventing or restricting the movement of contaminated firewood.

Mr. Speaker, as I noted earlier, addressing the threat of invasive species is a collaborative effort. I would like to take a few minutes to highlight a few of the many enduring partnerships our government has built in the area of invasive species management and education. We place tremendous value on these relationships, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our ministry stakeholders for their valuable advice and for giving of their time and talents to enrich our public policy work as a government. Ontario works with the

Great Lakes states and the US and Canadian governments to prevent aquatic invasive species, such as Asian carp, from entering the Great Lakes. Indeed, there is a federal office in my riding of Burlington which is doing extensive work in this area.

We have been working with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters for more than two decades to deliver the Invading Species Awareness Program. The program raises awareness of the threat of invasive species to Ontario's biodiversity. It engages the public in preventing and controlling the spread, and monitoring the distribution, of invasive species. This program also operates the Invading Species Hotline to give the public an avenue to report sightings, seek information and request educational material on invasive species.

More recently, we established the Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie to work with the federal government and other partners to address invasive forest and aquatic species and invasive plants. Ontario has provided approximately \$9.7 million towards the establishment and operation of this centre.

Partnerships such as these are helping us to protect our natural environment and industries that contribute thousands of jobs to our economy. One example is recreational fishing, an industry that contributes about \$2.2 billion to Ontario's economy and is also a notable contributor to our tourism industry. Ontario will continue to collaborate and work with these partners and, if passed, the proposed Invasive Species Act could help us expand the use of strategic partnerships.

The proposed act would provide the minister with authority to enter into agreements to help us prevent, detect, control and eradicate invasive species. As such, the legislation will provide us with the tools we need to protect our environment and our economy. Under the proposed act, regulations could be made to prohibit certain activities to help prevent the spread of an invasive species. Agreements could identify exemptions that would be necessary to achieve desired outcomes. For example, an agreement with a local conservation partner could allow the partner to undertake a program to control species such as garlic mustard. The partner would be able to possess the plant during the control activities and then dispose of it properly.

As I said earlier, managing invasive species is a responsibility shared with other governments, industry, environmental groups and the public. In fact, Ontarians can report sightings of invasive species to help us detect new ones and monitor the spread of those that are more established.

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We can all play a role in protecting Ontario's biodiversity. How can we do this? By planting non-invasive species in gardens, by never releasing bait or any wildlife into nature, by washing our boats before moving them to another body of water, and by buying firewood locally and leaving what we don't use.

We need to engage all Ontarians in doing their part to protect species and habitats, and as policy-makers, we

need to do our part as well, by taking a leadership role with this proposed legislation. The proposed Invasive Species Act would help limit the social and economic impacts of invasive species by preventing them from becoming established, controlling their spread once they are here, and eradicating them if possible. As such, I would encourage all members of this House to support this critical legislation. I look forward to today's discussion and the debate to come.

In the meantime, it is my honour and pleasure to stand in this House and spend some time talking about my journey to public life, to talk about what I hope to accomplish and bring to public service during my time here and thank the people who have helped me along the way.

It is worth noting that in strict terms this is my inaugural speech, Mr. Speaker, and that I have already had the honour and privilege of speaking on a number of occasions, to items that are not just of local interest and concern to the people of my riding of Burlington, but to Ontarians as well.

I must say that I am rather glad to have had these two months to begin to become accustomed to this historic and storied place and the work that we do here. As such, I can now look back on the past few months with a bit of perspective and experience.

If this speech were to have a theme, I would say that it is gratitude. There are many people to thank and many things to be grateful for. Let me begin by thanking the people of Burlington for the confidence they expressed in me on June 12. I am humbled by that confidence, and I look forward to serving them in this place, and to working with them towards improving the quality of life of all of the people in our beautiful city.

It is an honour and a privilege to have this opportunity to make a difference in people's lives, to be entrusted with their hopes and dreams, as well as their challenges. I'm grateful to have the chance to work on behalf of such an extraordinary community, and with such kind and generous people.

I would like to take a moment to offer a sincere thank-you to my predecessor, Jane McKenna, for her sacrifices and service in representing the riding of Burlington since 2011.

Applause.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Yes. Since my election, I have come to know what Jane knew during her three years of able service here: The hours are long, the time away from family significant. Thank you, Jane, for representing Burlington in this place so ably.

On our first day of orientation, we were reminded that, of the 13 million people who call Ontario home, we are but 107. "How fortunate am I?" I thought, and I know that many of my colleagues feel the same. We came here with a sense of purpose and excitement, and with a desire to serve.

My colleague the Honourable Ted McMeekin is fond of quoting Bobby Kennedy. Ted volunteered for Bobby on one of his campaigns, and he heard him say about his

passion for making change: “Don’t get mad, don’t get even—get elected.” I think that call to action embodies the desire that most of us have here to make a difference in the lives of the people we serve, to work as diligently as we can on their behalf and to do so with a listening ear and an open heart.

Let me talk for just a minute, if I may, about another reason I’m grateful to the people of Burlington. I am not from Burlington. I was born in Windsor, Ontario. I came to Burlington in 2005. My late husband and I chose Burlington. He was an OPP officer, and to a certain degree we had a choice of where we wanted to live in the GTHA. We chose Burlington for its beauty and for its people, and for our families. My brother and his wife have called Burlington home for over 20 years. During that time, as a result of numerous visits, we fell in love with Burlington and decided to settle there, which we did in the summer of 2005.

Since that time, my affection and my ties to the community have deepened. Burlington has been very good to me, and I’d like to thank my friends and my community for their warm embrace. Since becoming your MPP, your kindness and your graciousness have been nothing short of overwhelming. I’m grateful to you for making this native of Windsor feel right at home in Burlington.

I can honestly say that there is no more beautiful place to live in our province than Burlington. I’m delighted to have this opportunity—

Interjections.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: That may be a moment of debate.

I’m grateful to have this opportunity to thank everyone who helped me during the election campaign this past June. To our extraordinary volunteers, our wonderful staff—most especially, our dedicated campaign manager—our generous donors, and to the members of the Burlington Riding Association, the words “thank you” don’t seem quite enough. Your support and your encouragement, your confidence expressed in me as your candidate, your kind words of comfort when I needed it most—for all of this and so much more, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Your support for me helped me during the election campaign, and it will serve to guide me in my work as the first Liberal in Burlington in 71 years. Our celebration on election night was one I shall never forget, and nothing short of extraordinary. Thank you for being there for me.

Perhaps most memorable was the presence of my family on election night. It has been said, and it’s true, that to do this job truly requires a support network unlike any other. I am truly blessed with an extraordinary group of siblings, their spouses, and my nieces and nephews.

Most of all, I was proud of the fact that my mother, Marie McMahon, was there with me. When we learned that I had won, we were standing in the foyer of my brother’s home. In an exchange I will never forget, my mother turned to me and said, “Your dad would be so proud.” It was a touching moment, to be sure, but it brought home to me, as indeed did my decision to run,

that I was truly fortunate to have been raised by two extraordinary people, who taught my brothers and sisters and I about the true meaning of working hard, giving back and community service.

My dad, Hugh McMahon, died in 1994 of cancer. Dad worked hard all his life. His family was his greatest joy. His own childhood was marked by challenging moments, from growing up during the Depression, to the start of the Second World War. Dad enlisted in the Canadian army at the age of 16; he lied about his age. He went overseas and served his country as part of the Canadian First Regiment. He landed in Sicily, saw action during the Italian campaign and later took part in the liberation of Holland.

A proud moment for me came in 2007 while attending, with an official delegation from Burlington city hall, the city of Apeldoorn, one of Burlington’s twin cities. We visited the Canadian War Cemetery in Nijmegen. A number of soldiers from my father’s unit are buried there, and his regimental crest is in the Apeldoorn city hall.

Dad returned to Canada after the war and married my mother, Marie, in 1948. He attended university briefly in Toronto and returned to Windsor, where he worked at Chrysler until 1981. Seven children followed, as did a life of community service in the militia and with many local organizations.

My mother, who I think is watching today, is a shining light for me. Mum will be 89 on Thursday. She was born in Glasgow and grew up in Windsor. A pioneer in so many ways and a strong believer in education, Mum attended Assumption University, then part of the University of Windsor. She got a science degree and served as a laboratory technologist at Windsor’s Grace Hospital for most of her career.

She and Dad both felt very strongly that education provided a gateway of opportunity, and they encouraged us in every way possible. Mum was adamant, too, that as women—there were five of us girls—we must have our independence, our own income and the ability to make our own decisions.

Mum is tiny in stature but mighty in every other sense of the word. Her love for her children, her care and concern for others and her utter selflessness have shaped my life in amazing ways. I would not be standing here today without her.

To you, Mum, I offer my undying love and thanks. Thank you for making me feel like I could do anything. Thank you for always being there for me, and for your wisdom and your friendship.

To my siblings: I’m truly grateful to you for your encouragement and support. I am so lucky to have such a tremendous group of ardent supporters and cheerleaders. As the youngest of all of you, I have benefited from your wisdom—and your mistakes—your advice, your terrific humour and your wit. You offer me a hand up when I need it, and no request is too much. When I told you I wanted to run, you were worried about the rigours of the debate and the demands of the job. After dutifully expressing your concerns to your younger sister, you were there from day one. Thank you all.

Earlier, I spoke of my parents as people who inspired me to public service. I grew up in a house where the mantra was, "To whom much is given, much is expected." Speaking of my mother, I should add that her personal commitment to her family and her community was recently recognized. Mum recently got a volunteer award from Hospice Windsor in recognition of her 30 years of service as a volunteer.

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Applause.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Yes. Thank you.

Every Thursday Mum cooks lunch with her friend for the past 70-plus years, Mabel Gagnier, for hospice patients and their families. I know that Mum is loved by her hospice family, but I know too, because she's told me this, that she gets as much out of this experience as she gives. Her stories of people who are in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances serve to bring a necessary perspective to her life and to mine as we reflect on what is important. As you can see, from my mother I learned empathy and compassion.

Speaking earlier this year to the CEO of the Carpenter Hospice in Burlington, I was reflecting on the same theme: the events that shape our lives and the people who inspire us. As we all know, one of the best parts of this job is the opportunity to attend events and meet the wonderful people in your riding. Well, it was very early in my job as an MPP that I truly understood what Burlington is made of, and it is strong stuff indeed.

On the evening of August 4, a once-in-100-years storm brought 200 millimetres of rain to Burlington in just six hours. This rain is the equivalent of the amount of precipitation that Burlington would see in July and August together. This devastating storm flooded our streets and people's homes. A rush of water filled people's basements and over 3,100 homes were damaged. As the unrelenting rain fell that night, reports began to pour in of flooding on the 407, the QEW, Fairview and New Streets, Brant, Guelph, Walkers Line and Appleby Line; all flooded, our major north-south arterial roads. The water overwhelmed Burlington's sewage system, which at capacity is built for three million litres an hour. At the height of the storm, this reached 10 million litres.

People's basements filled in mere moments as creeks overflowed their banks. Visiting devastated homes the next day on Regal Road, among the hardest hit, I met people who fled with their children, their animals and a few precious memories as water filled their basements within minutes. Seeing their anguish, not to mention the contents of their homes on their front lawns, was heart-wrenching.

On the 5th, I got on the phone, but many people were calling, too, wondering how they could help. My colleagues were there, and I'd like to thank them. The member from Halton; the Minister of Labour, the member from Oakville, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, all in neighbouring ridings, were there, offering a friendly word of advice. Thank you.

Applause.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Yes.

But it was the response of our community that was so remarkable. I reached out to the mayor that evening. He was travelling back from his cottage in response to the disaster. His own home was flooded. He hit the ground running the next day, and as we travelled door to door together, it became apparent that greater assistance was needed.

On the night of the flood and in the days that followed, our EMS personnel were extraordinary. Our front-line police officers, firefighters, paramedics—all were there, doing an amazing job rescuing people from their flooded vehicles and responding to those in need.

Later on, with the assistance of the region of Halton, the Red Cross came to our aid and did an extraordinary job quantifying the amount of flooding and the impact on people's lives. Together we mobilized community support. I called the CEO of United Way, and 72 hours later they had a website portal up and running to collect donations.

The mayor, working with our regional chair, mobilized staff. City and regional staff began the process of responding to those in need and going door to door. As the scope of the disaster became clear, city council met and declared a state of emergency, triggering an Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program request.

On the community side, donations poured in and the community foundation stepped up, offering much-needed volunteer and fundraising support. The CEO of the community foundation, Colleen Mulholland, and her team have done an extraordinary job. Under the chairmanship of Ron Foxcroft, the disaster relief committee has worked hand in hand with the community foundation to raise funds, and to date, I am proud to say that our generous community has contributed close to \$1 million to help their neighbours in need.

Indeed, one of the truly wonderful things about Burlington is how generous our community really is. In 2010, 30% of Burlingtonians contributed to a charitable cause, higher than the provincial average of 24.5%.

During the summer, I attended many events which contributed to the flood relief, raising funds and rallying the community, from neighbourhood fundraisers like the Up the Creek event started by some neighbours whose street and homes were flooded—they raised \$20,000—to our Rotary Club's Ribfest event, which raised thousands of dollars as well. There I was, side by side at the door, raising money with buckets, mayor and city councillors right beside me.

While the scope of the disaster made for a challenging summer for our community, and while much of the hard work remains to be done by the committee as they adjudicate requests for funding, I am proud to say that on November 10, my colleague, the member from Halton, and I announced that our government would be contributing up to \$3 million to support Burlington and its flood relief. For a new MPP, this was an extraordinarily proud moment.

Speaker, the election provided me with an excellent opportunity to speak to some of the opportunities and

challenges facing our community. During that time and since, I've had many conversations about the kind of Burlington we all want now and into the future. Burlington has one of the highest median incomes in Canada and we enjoy an excellent quality of life overall. Still, there are challenges. As the recent Vital Signs report by the Burlington Community Foundation shows, Burlington has one of the oldest populations in the GTHA. While most of our seniors are aging successfully, over 5% of them are living in poverty. More broadly, close to 8% or over 13,000 of our residents in Burlington are living in low-income households. When it comes to housing, access to affordable housing remains a barrier to many.

When it comes to employment, Burlington is doing well, with stronger employment levels than Ontario as a whole. The number of jobs is up 7% and the number of businesses is up 4% since the 2012 employment survey.

To maintain this excellent quality of life, I've had conversations about how, as a community, we can work together to tackle some of our challenges. Burlington is built out; therein lies another challenge. Our growth will come from infill and density. With growth comes the need for stronger transportation networks. I look forward to working with city hall, our region, local businesses, citizens' groups and my colleagues in the House on creating transit hubs in Burlington and encouraging the kinds of alternative transportation—cycling and walking—that will make our community more connected and more liveable, and attract investment.

Issues such as food security, investing in our agri-food sector, which is a strong sector locally, and continued investments in health and education will continue to dominate my conversations in the months and years to come and remain areas of strong local focus. In particular, youth and adolescent mental health is another area which is in significant need of focus, as demonstrated again by our community foundation and their work. I've also had terrific conversations about how, working together, we can find solutions to these important issues.

On a final note, Mr. Speaker, I started this speech talking about what brought me here and what I hope to accomplish. I want to close my remarks by mentioning someone who's no longer here but who had and continues to have a very positive impact on my life. On June 6, 2006, my late husband, Greg Stobbart, a veteran OPP officer with 24 years of experience in policing, was killed by a careless driver. Greg died, not in the line of duty, but doing something he loved. We were training for a triathlon. He had recently purchased a new bike, and with a beautiful day beckoning, set out on a training ride from which he never returned. Greg's tragic death at the age of 44 in a senseless collision was a life-changing event for me, for my family and for his as well. His legacy lives on in me and my desire to continue in this place the work that I started to create a more bicycle-friendly Ontario.

Our response to Greg's death came on many fronts. First, working with then-Minister of Transportation the Honourable Jim Bradley, we changed the Highway Traffic Act. In 2009, after sustained advocacy, we got

Greg's Law passed, increasing the penalties on suspended drivers based on similar legislation in six other provinces. The man who killed Greg had five convictions for driving under suspension, four convictions for driving with no licence, \$15,000 in unpaid fines, and two months after he killed my husband, he hit someone else.

As you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, this instilled in us the importance of focusing on that advocacy and securing those changes to the Highway Traffic Act. Our goal was to prevent others from going through what we did, and we wanted to get those repeat offenders out from behind the wheel and off the road. Greg's Law became the law of Ontario in October 2009.

Second, we launched the Share the Road Cycling Coalition in Ontario in 2008. Share the Road has become the provincial cycling policy and advocacy organization, representing thousands of local organizations, cyclists, stakeholders and municipal leaders from across Ontario, united in a vision of safer communities for all road users.

In 2012, I had the privilege of sitting on the coroner's review into cycling deaths in Ontario and secured a recommendation for an Ontario cycling strategy. Together with the Honourable Glen Murray, who was then Minister of Transportation, I launched that strategy, the first of its kind in Ontario in over 20 years, in September 2013, a proud moment.

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In Greg's memory, and in memory of all the cyclists who have been killed and injured, I look forward to continuing the work we started at Share the Road. Together with all members of this House, given the tremendous benefits of cycling, I look forward to making our communities and our province even more bike-friendly in the years to come.

In the interim, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you and my colleagues and all the members of this House for their gracious welcome, for your friendship and your support, for this opportunity to share my thoughts with you and for the privilege of being the MPP for Burlington.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It is my pleasure to respond. I'm going to miss the minister's speech and just go straight to the member from Burlington and her maiden speech. They are always special speeches, because you learn so much about the member's family and what brought them to the Legislature.

I've learned a few things today. The member's mother was born in Glasgow, as my mother was born in Glasgow, and that she comes from a large family—the youngest of a large family. She certainly has a very close relationship with her mother. Of course, I already knew the other connection was her husband, Greg—who, unfortunately, as she described, was killed by a suspended driver—an OPP officer. My spouse is an OPP officer as well, so more connections than I realized. I certainly want to congratulate the member on her maiden speech.

Also, she thanked the past member for Burlington for her work. I know that Jane McKenna has been out to some community events, and she says how nice you have been to her at those events. So that's nice to hear as well.

I do take exception with the comment that Burlington is the most beautiful place in Ontario or the world, I think she said, especially when I know that she has got a cottage in Wasauksing First Nation in Parry Sound district on beautiful Georgian Bay, which I'm sure is more beautiful than Burlington. So I just want to get that on the record, Mr. Speaker.

I congratulate her for the work that she has done. I know that certainly with Share the Road Cycling Coalition—she has been a huge part of that. I've had the pleasure of working with her on paved shoulders, and I look forward to continue working with her with the Parry Sound active transportation committee. She sat in on a meeting last week, and I know they have a few things they'd like to accomplish: Highway 559, Highway 124, a connection into Parry Sound. We look forward to completing those in the near future.

Congratulations on your maiden speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, it's an honour and a thrill to be able to respond to the new member from Burlington, a friend of mine for many years.

One of her favourite sayings, which she didn't use today, was, "You can take the girl from Windsor, but you can't take Windsor from the girl." That was ever so evident today, I think, when she went out of her way to thank Jane McKenna for the work that she has done. Jane was also a friend to many of us here. I think that showed a lot of class when you did that.

Most of us knew the new member from Burlington—when I was on the board of AMO and on the board of FCM, Ms. McMahon would be there with her cycling activists reminding us of the importance of active living and cycling. We got to know her very well there.

What she didn't tell us today, Speaker, is that her political pedigree goes back many years. I mean, we have mutual friends in Shaughnessy Cohen—the late Shaughnessy Cohen. She used to work for Herb Gray, Paul Martin, Jean Chrétien—a lot of very important Liberals—and did very well with them as well, Speaker, and with the press corps in Ottawa.

I'm especially pleased that she mentioned her mom, Marie. Marie is a terrific lady. I have reason to believe that—well, prior to the new member from Burlington joining the Liberal Party, I believe Marie was one of my supporters. Hi, Marie! Nice to see you.

We also share the fact that our dads were in the military.

It is a real treat, Speaker, to share any time that we can with the new member from Burlington. You did a great job in your inaugural address.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is one of those two-minuters you wish was a four-minuter, because I want to

reference off the top how pleased I am to see Bill 37 moving forward, the invasive species legislation. It's certainly very, very important, one that I hope will get the support of the opposition. We will become the only jurisdiction with stand-alone legislation on invasive species.

We all know how important it is that we deal with the challenge of that. As a former Minister of Natural Resources, I am very, very conscious of that, so I congratulate the minister for bringing it forward and again hope that there will be strong support on the other side of the House for this legislation moving forward.

I will now use my time, if I may, to address my good friend and colleague from Burlington on this opportunity that she had to make her inaugural address. I've got to tell you, I've been here in the Legislature now for a number of years and it absolutely brought me back to my own inaugural address many years ago. I think what you conveyed in such a touching way was just how incredibly important it is for us to be given this extraordinary privilege and honour to represent our constituents—all our constituents. That way, it's a strangely non-partisan activity that we have, and it's our job to do so. You addressed it in such a warm fashion.

The reference to your family—it's impossible not to have a first address where you don't speak about your parents and your loved ones, who have made such a difference and supported you to be able to get to this place that we watch on TV. Again, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh referenced your political pedigree. It's indeed impressive.

You and I have been friends for a long time, but the long and the short of it is that you're doing a great job already. You've got a lot of class, and you care about people the way that I believe all of us in this Legislature ultimately do. I congratulate and thank you, and I congratulate the minister for bringing forward this important legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I too want to add my congratulations to the member from Burlington on her inaugural speech. I've only been here a short time myself—just over three years, I think. I can remember, when I did my first speech, what a thrill it was and what a very nervous time it was. I'm not used to speaking in front of a large crowd, especially one that has been here for many years and has a lot more experience than I do.

I was most impressed with your talk about invasive species. It's something that we in rural Ontario and certainly around the lakes have gotten to know. I can think back to the time of Dutch elm disease, which is probably the most major one that I can remember. Now we have the emerald ash borer attacking our trees throughout southern Ontario. I think it has probably gotten to the north right now. We have to be on guard for that, and I'm certainly glad that you brought that up. I know that on the farm that we used to live on, we could see it in our bush, in our ash trees—the borer and its effects.

Family is so important to any MPP. I know that when I decided to get involved in this life, my wife played a very large part in my deciding to do this. I know your family is very important to you. We can't do this job without our family. That's the short and the long of it.

I would also like to say that I have a Windsor connection too. I was born in Windsor and spent the first 18 years of my life on a farm just east of Cottam. You might know where Cottam is; it's just a little town. We had orchards there. We grew peaches and pears, and a bit of cash crop besides that.

Thank you so much for your speech today. You showed a lot of passion, and I'm sure you'll do well at this position.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Burlington for her response.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to thank the members of the House and in particular the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the member from Perth–Wellington.

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On reflection, two things, I guess: The first is that, having now had the opportunity to speak to my colleagues and tell you a little bit about where I'm from, why I ran and why we're all here, I think what this speaks to is the unity of purpose in this House. On any given day, politics is a passionate and sometimes blood sport, and people exchange their views in this place in sometimes vociferous and passionate ways. But at the end of the day, what these remarks from my generous colleagues pointed out is that we're all here because we want the same thing: We want to work hard on behalf of the people who sent us here.

Percy mentioned one of my former bosses, the Honourable Jean Chrétien. I'll share with the House a conversation I had with Mr. Chrétien, who called me after I was elected—it was a great thrill. I asked him for his biggest piece of advice, and he said, "Never, ever forget the people of Burlington." The people of Burlington were the number one reason I was here, and despite all the other trappings of public life—and we all know they are there—to never forget the people who sent me.

I learned that lesson, too, from the Honourable Herb Gray, who was an ardent constituency member. I used to joke that Mr. Gray would take a constituency call in the bathroom. As the member from Windsor–Tecumseh knows, having been a member of the fifth estate, Mr. Gray was nothing if not incredibly dedicated to the people of Windsor.

Those are the experiences I've had. These are the things that have shaped me. I want to thank again the members of this House. I want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry as well for being such an able minister, and for allowing me the chance to speak to this important legislation on invasive species today. Again, thank you, colleagues, for your very generous remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I too would like to congratulate the member from Burlington on her inaugural speech and welcome her to the Legislature. I look forward to working with her over the next few years.

I'm also pleased to rise to the opportunity to speak today to Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. I'm going to start off by saying that at this particular time, our party will be supporting this legislation. We've heard from many stakeholders, and they too support the legislation, but we're waiting to hear from some more. So, at this point, going forward, we will be supporting this legislation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank a couple of members of the PC caucus who started working on this file many, many years ago. Sitting behind me right now is MPP Toby Barrett from Haldimand–Norfolk, who has been a champion on the Asian carp issue throughout Ontario and continues to be. He even toured the United States Senate committee hearings in order to see action initiated on Asian carp so it didn't invade our waters in Canada, and I applaud him for his efforts.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the former member from Oshawa, Jerry Ouellette, who served this Legislature with distinction for a number of years, including serving as Minister of Natural Resources for a time. Jerry's input to this Legislature over the years has truly benefitted not only Ontario but Canada and the movement for a safe, clean and natural environment for everyone throughout the country.

In doing so, Jerry did participate in a speech back last April, I believe, or February—one of those months—where he spoke on the Invasive Species Act. Before I get into my speech, I just want to highlight some of the things that Jerry brought up, because his voice will be missed here. They're just items that I think should be put into the record, carrying this bill forward. So if you wouldn't mind me just reading some of what Jerry Ouellette brought forward in his debate on the Invasive Species Act—I'm quoting Jerry now:

"In some of the previous research that I had done, groups like the Federation of Ontario Naturalists had identified three specific types of invaders. There were natural invaders, accidental invaders and intentional invaders. Some of the natural invaders were some of the opossum or the white-tailed deer that slowly migrated north into Ontario and started to become resident...."

The "Federation of Ontario Naturalists at that time listed ... accidental invaders, such as what happened in 1959, when the St. Lawrence Seaway was opened up. It allowed the sea lamprey to come into the Great Lakes."

I'm going to talk about the sea lamprey later on and the devastating effect it has had on commercial fishing throughout the Great Lakes. At that time, it did devastate the fishing industry.

Jerry also talks about a concern in the bill, which I will also emphasize, but I will reiterate Jerry: "We very much appreciate the inspections and the warrant that is required to enter a place or dwelling," allowing members of the

MNR—conservation officers—when they think an invasive species is inside a dwelling or a home, they have to get a warrant. “However, when you go further into the legislation later on, there doesn’t appear to be a warrant required for entering properties that may contain invasive species.” Jerry, at that time, had a concern about that part of the legislation; we do, as well, carrying on as the PC Party, so you’ll hear more about that as I go forward.

Jerry later on talks about the intentional invader that he mentioned earlier, “which can be used to counter some of the actions of things like purple loosestrife or beetles introduced to kill off the plant. We have to make sure this beetle doesn’t become a problem later on.” What Jerry is basically saying here is that sometimes to fight invasive species you have to introduce a predator to that invasive species to take care of it. However, at the same time, we have to ensure that that invasive species that we introduce “doesn’t become a problem later on” down the road. So Jerry was very insightful to ensure that this comes out in discussion and debate at this Legislature.

Another thing that Jerry does talk about is the fact that the minister can give permission for the conservation officers, when they are accessing property, to take other people along with them. The current concern that Jerry has brought forward is the fact of: Who are these people that are coming onto the properties? Could it possibly be OSPCA inspectors coming on board to look for things that aren’t really related to the Invasive Species Act? It’s kind of an opportunity for other agencies to hop on board with conservation officers with regard to inspection for invasive species and looking for other things.

Mind you, at this point you don’t need a warrant to do that, and that is a huge concern. It’s basically looking at the intent of the legislation, as Jerry says.

He mentions Minister Leal. “I know the member from Peterborough—knowing his rural community, some of the farming community would have concerns about these sorts of things happening, and establishing guidelines or the ability to ensure that the correct individuals—that the intent of the legislation is being followed out. Many times we bring these things forward, and the intent sometimes happens to open up doors for other activities that cannot be part of the intent.”

This Legislature definitely, when creating legislation, has the right intent behind the laws, but as they’re interpreted down the road it could deviate from the intent, causing unforeseen problems. That’s when we start getting phone calls in our constituency offices about land rights, per se, in this one.

The other aspect which I do agree with—and I’ve heard from my stakeholders—that Jerry brings up is that there “doesn’t appear to be any funding specifically allocated that’s going to ... ensure that what needs to be done gets done in the province of Ontario.” Jerry realizes that “the ministry is trying to look at ways of cost recovery. We constantly read petitions, because there are some strong concerns about the hunting and fishing regulations are not being readily available ... and accessible to individuals.”

The point is that the ministry has now cut back, and now hunters and anglers aren’t getting access to the regulations. It’s pretty hard, when you’re out on a boat in the middle of Lake Erie, to pick up a signal on your cellphone and actually download the regulations that you’re supposed to have on hand.

What Jerry is basically saying is that there have been no funds allocated to enforcing this new Invasive Species Act. From what I’ve heard from conservation authorities across the province, without any new funding available for this Invasive Species Act, it’s going to be very, very hard for anybody to deal with the wide array of invasive species throughout this province, especially phragmites.

Speaking of phragmites, Jerry Ouellette goes on and talks quite a bit about the MTO having to be involved with the solutions. It’s not just one ministry specifically. The fact that if you drive along the 400-series highways—particularly, in my area, the 402 and the 401—you’ll notice nothing but phragmites all the way down the sides of the 401, and on the median as well. It’s a terribly noxious weed, and I will also touch on phragmites during my speech.

I just thought I’d take the opportunity to reiterate what Jerry had spoken about during his last few months here at the Legislature, and to thank him again—and Toby Barrett behind me—for quite a bit of the activity and work they have done on invasive species.

Basically, Bill 37 is a bill that’s about time. If you look across the province at the number of invasive species that we do have, we’re behind the eight ball.

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I’m glad the ministry has brought this bill forward again. It’s not perfect; I don’t think any bill that ever comes to this Legislature is perfect. However, I am hoping that this government does take the time to listen to the opposition’s concerns, and stakeholders’ concerns, and make amendments, not time-allocate the bill and not time-allocate committee. This is a very important bill for our natural resources, our environment, throughout the province, and they need to take the time to listen not only to the opposition but to the stakeholders and make change.

I feel this bill is a more reactive bill than a proactive bill. I’d like to see a bill that prevents the invasive species from entering our environment. This bill is mainly dealing with, “They’re going to be here no matter what. Let’s deal with them.” Once an invasive species takes hold, it’s pretty hard to get rid of them, and they become an expense that is lifelong. Spending a little bit more of the money at the start, to prevent an invasive species from entering our province, in the long term is a far better cost-saver than waiting for them to come and then dealing with the invasive species.

The bill talks about four points for a species to be qualified as an invasive species. You look at the biological characteristics, mainly how the species is going to interact with the ecosystem, and what effects they will have on other species within the environment.

They also look at whether they’re available to disperse throughout the environment. How much are these

invasive species going to take over the environment and grow beyond the area that they infect? In fact, if you look at phragmites, they're just drying out our wetlands and wreaking havoc in our farmers' fields.

Number 3 is the threat: What threat do they pose? Again, if I go back to phragmites, for instance, phragmites not only grows wildly but also chokes out all the other vegetation and plant life around it by releasing toxins into the soil so they cannot grow. Or you look at Asian carp, which is just on the cusp of entering our waters, and how they will reproduce four times a year. I found that quite troubling. Population control is unbelievable. Not only that, but they of course will compete with our current native fish stock. Also, they jump out of the water, and to boaters, jet skiers, water skiers and anglers, that could be quite a hazard to have these fish jumping all over the place.

Number 4 is the impact on society and the economics. I think a very important consideration to be made in this legislation is, what's the economic impact on areas throughout the province? You look at the commercial fishing industry based in Wheatley, Ontario, which is in the Chatham-Kent riding. The second-biggest port for commercial fishing is in Port Stanley, which is in Elgin county, naturally, in my riding. The effect of these Asian carp on commercial fishing—it provides well-paying jobs for people. It's hard work. Not a lot of people like to do the commercial fishing role. But for those who are participants in the commercial fishing industry, the devastation that Asian carp could possibly make to that sector of the economy could really hurt Port Stanley and Wheatley, and really generate higher sales for food, if the fishing agency is devastated. Just look at what happened out in eastern Canada when their fishing industry disappeared, the effects it had throughout the eastern provinces. We'll feel that same effect here.

It's very important that these matters are looked at very quickly. Hopefully, the bureaucratic process that is created in order to identify invasive species isn't as cumbersome as the member from Oxford was saying about getting the relief funding, for disaster relief from the storm; it has taken up to two years just to get through the bureaucratic process. We can't have a process that is that cumbersome when dealing with these invasive species, because if they do invade the area, we need to act as quickly as possible to avoid their spread and their economic devastation to the area.

Those are the four points that the ministry is going to use to determine if a species is in fact an invasive species or not.

Again, I prefer the proactive route to prevent them from coming in—what measures can we take to ensure that they don't enter our environment?—as opposed to reactive. We do need the reactive part of this bill, definitely, to deal with what we have to deal with already, because we are so, so far behind the eight ball.

I thought I'd just go through the bill and outline some of the situations that will occur during this bill and maybe highlight some points that I think need better

clarification or more discussion before we get this bill into committee. Again, I'll keep on this: Let's not time-allocate this. Let's keep the debate open for everybody, and let's have a truly good committee process where we can let Ontarians—we're going to have to leave Toronto on this committee, guys. There are not a lot of invasive species in downtown Toronto because there's not a lot of environment—there's a lot of cement, and I'm pretty sure cement is not going to be invaded by invasive species.

We've got to talk to people in the north—the forest industry. We've got to come down to the south where there's the phragmites and the agriculture—we've got to go to eastern Ontario. We've got to tour around the Great Lakes. We've got to hear from the people who are drastically affected by the invasive species. They have to have their input, and they're not going to be able to drive to Toronto to have it, because they're working hard every day, and to take a whole day off to come here for five minutes—it's not the right thing to do with this legislation.

I'm hoping the government House leader is listening to this debate and will take those points seriously, because it's important that we hear from Ontarians on such an important piece of legislation. As was said before in committee during our rushed process, if you rush through legislation, you're going to get unintended consequences down the road, and when you get unintended consequences down the road, then we're going to bring legislation back here to fix it, because it's usually costly to the system.

I would like to get this bill done correctly, maybe take the extra month to get it passed, and ensure that at the end of the day we have an Invasive Species Act that is good for all Ontarians and not needing to cause commotion and problems to our farmers or landowners, or just about anybody who enjoys the use of their land or the natural resources that we do have.

This bill will enact the Invasive Species Act, and will have the identification of invasive species and carriers throughout the province.

"The minister may authorize a person in writing to engage in activities that would otherwise be prohibited. The authorizations" would be "issued for purposes set out in section 10" of the bill. "An authorization may be amended or revoked by the minister." Basically, the minister will now be able to allow people to engage in an activity that they have banned over the last few years, most likely with regard to pesticides or herbicides, where you can't get access to them in this province anymore. This will allow the minister to allow landowners to get access to those pesticides or herbicides to deal with the invading species. Mr. Speaker, I just hope, again, that the bureaucratic process that it takes to deal with accessing these needed agents to destroy the invading species is not too burdensome.

I just want to go through some of my concerns with the bill before we go forward here. Invasive species have the potential to impact Ontario's economy. We've talked about that. Ontario's location within the Great Lakes

basin and its shared border with numerous jurisdictions puts our province at greater risk for invasive species. Basically, we have so much border with the Americans that are in the waterway in southern Ontario that the threat of aquatic invasive species is quite high. We need to ensure that we have the partnerships going forward with the Americans so that we can go down on their side of the lakes and deal with the invasive species as more of a proactive approach as opposed to waiting for them to fail in their efforts and the invading species comes forward.

The approach of the act is to create a discretionary species blacklist, which requires harm from a species to be identified before it's regulated. Again, that's a reactive approach. It's reactive because you wait until you figure out the species is harmful as opposed to studying the species beforehand—a lot of people call that a proactive list.

The pathways approach is another idea that I would put forward. If this government could adopt more of a pathways approach when dealing with invasive species: The regulation of the invasive species is based on the risk of species via certain pathways. In regulating those pathways, the risk is managed and this can be controlled. They have tried it before. Jerry Ouellette tried to pass a bill where regulation of ballast water near boats, wood products coming into the province, making sure they're sterilized, making sure Asian carps are eviscerated before entering into our marketplace—there are many pathway-oriented measures that we could take in this legislation to ensure that we're more proactive as opposed to reactive, as I mentioned earlier.

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The other route to go, which may be something that we could have a topic of discussion about, is to ban all species entering Ontario and have them risk assessed before we let them come in. That's ensuring that there's basically a whitewash of every species entering into this province and having this ministry-controlled committee, which is going to be assessing the species at risk, decide whether the species is definitely going to be invasive or not. Instead of letting everything in our borders and seeing what causes a problem and what doesn't, this would be the optimal way to ensure that the species are in control and checked.

The act does not provide for a process involving independent scientists to identify significant-threat invasive species and recommend them for prescription for regulation. You see, that one I'd like to discuss. It's kind of iffy because we can see how some of these things can get out of control, if you look at the Endangered Species Act, where they do have that body at arm's length from the government; however, any time there is a problem, the government throws their hands in the air, saying, "We can't do anything about it." It's a hands-off committee, and sometimes that committee is a little off base in which direction they're going because they don't look at other circumstances, which I'm glad the ministry has done with the Invasive Species Act, where they're actually looking

at the social and economic impact on an area, and when they hit the Endangered Species Act, that's thrown out the window and not discussed. Maybe a hybrid model needs to be developed going forward, where we do allow for independent scientists to have their say with regard to the Invasive Species Act, but continue with the four points that the ministry has set forth in deciding what is an invasive species.

There is no process to identify invasive species or recommendations. The act—this is a concern of mine—effectively requires ordinary citizens and community groups, including private landowners, to apply for an authorization to eradicate significant- or moderate-threat invasive species under section 10 and to comply with conditions of the authorization or an eradication under section 12.

My concern is that we're going to create this massive bureaucratic system that the poor farmer just outside St. Thomas, Ontario, wanting to deal with his phragmites, is going to have to wait an inordinate amount of time in order to deal with it. From my understanding, dealing with phragmites, you tackle them in the fall, and in the early spring. You cut down the phragmites, you spray, and when the shoots start growing up, you spray again, and then in the spring, you do it again. If it's tied down in a bureaucratic system and you miss that window of opportunity, you are therefore having this farmer not only having to keep his invading species for another year but also that invading species will continue to spread and grow and take over his land, ruin his crops, maybe his wetlands, and it's really a trickle-down effect. My concern here is how they are going to develop the regulations and how bureaucratic this process is going to get, and I'm hoping they are listening to this speech.

The other concern I have here is this act could possibly be very heavy-handed on innocent people in this province, innocent people who find the invasive species on their property through no fault of their own, or maybe it was the fault of a neighbour down the road, but the cost associated with dealing with invasive species is now downloaded on that property owner, let alone the fines that may follow afterwards. I'm hoping there's some flexibility in dealing with the invasive species that are already here. I mean, how many people have invasive species on their property that are going to be deemed invasive species that don't really know about it? The phragmites people, certainly, they definitely are not enjoying the phragmites. But there are other species out there that people might even plant in their front gardens that are going to be there. Is there going to be leeway for them to eradicate these species? Are they going to get a notice: "By the way, you happen to have this invading species that needs to be removed," or are they just going to be fined, saying, "You have an invading species here and this act has been implemented"? There are unopened questions there of really where they are going to be going with that Invasive Species Act and the innocent people out there who don't really understand or know that the invading species is on their property or it's part of their garden. How are they going to be treated?

The inspector's power is quite large. The inspector can declare land, a building, structure or conveyance as an invaded place, and that's extremely broad in their powers. An inspector needs to only find evidence that a single threat of species is present and have reasonable grounds to believe that an order is required to control, remove or eradicate the invasive species. Under section 22, the inspector has the power to "take any other measure that the inspector considers appropriate to assist in preventing the suspected invasive species from spreading and restricting access."

The possession offence effectively prevents landowners from taking due diligence measures themselves; then the remaining scheme imposes harsh enforcement measures. Yes, the landowner can't see the invading species and go at it and deal with it; they must go through the bureaucratic process the government is going to create. Again, I'm hoping that's not too cumbersome. In an ideal world, once a species is listed as an invading species and the landowner notices it on his property, we would hope that they would be able to remedy it themselves without having to get permission from the government.

This last point I'm going to mention about this bill at this point is a concern of mine. It's a lack of respect for landowners in this province. I think there's some wording that needs to be changed. Under section 29, it leaves compensation of those affected as something the minister "may authorize." If a person is at fault and is subject to property loss or damages due to government intervention, they "may" be compensated, meaning if there is an invading—the ash borer, for example. The ash borer is a concession down the road in this forest cover. The minister has the power, in order to stop that spread of the ash borer, to go to the neighbour's woodlot and clear-cut it to take it out, because that was a remedy to get rid of the ash borer: take out all the trees so it can't spread beyond the area. Under this legislation, they can walk onto a person's property, clear-cut the property and walk away. "May". If they feel like it, maybe they will compensate him for his loss. A woodlot is quite valuable to people; it's also the land value.

I believe that we should have a discussion on how they should compensate the landowner. Have respect. The landowner is a landowner for a reason: He's bought that property; it's his property. He pays taxes on it and, more than likely, he'd be willing to work with the ministry to ensure the invasive species is contained. However, the way this legislation is written, the landowner is left out of the equation; he doesn't even have to be part of the solution. The government can walk in on his land, take care of the invasive species and anything on his property that they deem associated and walk out at the end of the day, and that landowner, that farmer, that person, that young couple who just bought this land thinking they'd have a great investment down the road would not be compensated for their loss. That is another contention of this bill that will come up, I believe, in discussion, and definitely should have an amendment going forward.

I know the government doesn't have a lot of money. However, the government doesn't need to be stripping the rights of people to own property. It's our right in this province to own property. It's our right, it's our freedom to express who we are. This government has done a few too many things with regards to property ownership. We just look at the Green Energy Act, where they stripped away the power of municipalities to have a say in where wind turbines are being placed. This is more of a microcosm effect on individual owners, and coming from rural Ontario, which this act is going to mainly affect, they need to be cognizant of the fact that we need to have respect for ownership of our properties.

Other points that I have heard from stakeholders are that the bill was rushed and hasn't received adequate public consultation. The ongoing theme from any stakeholder I talk to is that the enforcement officers are already underequipped to deal with existing legislation. This bill is not providing any more resources for them to handle the added resources.

If you look in my area, the Aylmer district, which basically covers—I don't know the definite details, but basically the Woodstock to Windsor area, there are eight conservation officers to cover that area. These people have to watch the land during the hunting season, and they're torn apart on that. They often have to do partnerships with the OPP when they're available. The fact that they already have those enforcements jobs to do, the fact that this is going to download a heck of a lot more—because these people are going to have to go to inspect; that's part of the mandate of this legislation. They're going to be inspecting everyone's property in Ontario and accessing the property without any permission from the landowner.

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I don't know if, at the end of the day, they pass this legislation and there's no resources behind it, because if you look at the MNR, the Ministry of Natural Resources is the ministry that gets cut no matter what budget comes forward. I'm not just blaming this government; if you look at any government throughout the ages of the history of Ontario, the Ministry of Natural Resources is usually one of the first ministries to be cut down. It's a shadow of itself from years gone by, and continually decreasing. In fact, they've run out of so much money that they go after the hunting and fishing community to pay more fees, and increased their licences so they can take that money and utilize it through accounting games to show that they're looking after natural resources, but really, it's subsidizing the entire ministry. For them to come out with this large bill, this Invasive Species Act, without the necessary resources for the employees—either they're going to see a downloading of costs to the municipalities that take it up, or it's going to be totally shifted onto the landowners to deal with these invasive species after dealing with the bureaucratic process that this ministry is going to create.

I'm going to outline a few more concerns that I do have with the legislation. I mentioned briefly earlier—

Jerry Ouellette, actually, mentioned it. It's inter-ministerial co-operation. Usually in government, I think a way we terribly waste money is that the ministries are run in silos. Situations that occur in one ministry which may affect another one are ignored between the two, and it may cause potential problems. I mentioned the MTO. The Ministry of Transportation has to be fully on board with this new legislation because they're going to have to provide the resources themselves to deal with the 400-series highways, which are inundated with phragmites.

But I'd also like to raise the issue of the Ministry of the Environment. They have strict rules with regard to pesticides and herbicides. They have quite a huge bureaucratic process. A lot of the phragmites treatments that we will have to use to treat phragmites will be over some of our water systems. A lot of the wetlands are being tackled by the phragmites. To use herbicides over water lands us in a whole new boatload of regulation and legislation that the landowner and/or the Ministry of Natural Resources is going to have to deal with in order to deal with these invasive species.

It's quite hopeful that not only do we have this legislation for the Ministry of Natural Resources, but there are also talks going on between the different ministries so that they can work together for positive solutions and cost-saving solutions in order to deal with invasive species.

I'd hate to see this bill pass and there are no resources and no interministerial co-operation: The bill is passed and they can congratulate themselves on passing the Invasive Species Act; however, nothing gets done, because it's caught in the quagmire of government, and government tends to get in the way of some good ideas.

I was happy to attend on Friday. The federal government made an announcement in London with regard to aquatic invasive species. I sat in on a round table and I thought it was a great program that the federal government came forward with. I'd like to just mention a bit about it, because it kind of ties into our invasive species that we're dealing with right now.

Basically, the expected outcome from the federal government's new aquatic invasive species regulations is to "reduce the potential damage to aquatic environments by preventing the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species"—I like the word "preventing"—"which have the potential to drastically alter habitats and render them inhospitable for native species.

"They are also expected to help reduce or avoid some of the costs arising from damages caused by aquatic invasive species which can be very significant once the invader has established itself."

I just want to talk a bit about the invasive species the sea lamprey. The sea lamprey is kind of that ugly worm-looking creature, as I like to call it. It has a bunch of tentacles around its mouth; it's just ugly. But it attaches to fish and is a parasite to them and ends up killing them. Or they fall off, and the fish is damaged and what have you. One lamprey will kill 40 to 50 pounds of fish.

They're talking like there are close to a million lamprey in the Great Lakes. The sea lamprey has no

natural predators in Ontario, so they are free to do what they want. They spawn by swimming upstream, up our tributaries, and they sit there for three or four years and grow. Then they go into our Great Lakes and destroy our fishery.

The rainbow trout is definitely on a decline due to these sea lampreys. Once their targeted species is limited, they go on to others. So now they are affecting our perch. They are affecting our pickerel, or walleye—whatever you want to call it. That's the bread and butter of our commercial fishing industry.

It's really bad. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound brings it up quite often. They have a big salmon catch out in Owen Sound, and the sea lampreys have been noted to be quite a concern. So anyway, the sea lamprey, which is an invasive species, is a concern.

It's interesting: We had members from the Great Lakes commission—I don't have the proper name of it. They talk about how it's all related. If you look at our dams at the end of tributaries, the dams prevent lampreys from swimming up to spawn. So the dams are a good thing. However, with the lack of infrastructure throughout the province—and I was talking to my conservation authorities. They have \$10 million, \$20 million, \$40 million worth of infrastructure fixes for their dams throughout this province, and they are allocated \$5 million a year. So they're constantly behind. But these dams are breaking down, and there's no money to fix them, which is allowing the sea lamprey to swim up and spawn and create.

They have had great success in destroying 90% of the sea lamprey population with dams. Also they have this special spray they put in the water that dissipates quickly. It's safe for humans and other species; it focuses on the sea lamprey. But with the crumbling infrastructure that's not available because money has gone elsewhere, it's a losing battle.

That's just one aspect of the sea lamprey: the fact that one little invasive species—when you think you're getting ahead, there are other items. That's why I talk about cross-ministerial co-operation to ensure that the infrastructure is there to help fight these invasive species.

I could also talk about the Asian carp, Mr. Speaker. I do want to talk about that for a few minutes here. Right now, the Asian carp isn't in Canada yet, but it's right on our border in the Illinois area and in some of the Michigan areas—very close to entering Ontario waters. The concern is that we're not there enough to help the army corps in the States prevent these Asian carp from entering our waters. They are devastating; I talked about their reproduction. But they have physical barriers up in the waterways—electrical barriers, electrical fences—to ensure that the fish don't go by. They have also hired commercial fishermen to target the Asian carp. They are harvesting these guys like crazy, Mr. Speaker. However, with the way they reproduce, it's hard to keep up.

They are in the midst of developing their own chemical solution to the Asian carp. It's not quite there yet, but they are basically focusing on the gills of the

Asian carp, something with the Asian carp where the chemicals will lock on to their gills and destroy them.

What I found interesting is sound is a great deterrent for Asian carp. You put the sound under the water, and they migrate away from the location. So they are pushing them down. There's a push in the States to add these sound wave machines, or whatever you want—probably AC/DC on the CD player down in the water—in the locks, in canals, in the Michigan area, where they tend to snake through.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Celine Dion—that will get rid of them.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: No; I like Celine Dion. I'm a fan. But that's just me.

Earlier, they mentioned the four different types of carp out there that are going to be disastrous to our fishing communities. The other invasive species I'm just going to mention quickly before going on is the phragmites. Phragmites, if you talk to Ducks Unlimited, is devastating because if you look at what phragmites does, it squeezes out our wetlands, because it loves to grow in that little wet area. It destroys all our vegetation.

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When you start destroying our wetlands, not only do you destroy the habitat for ducks and other animals, but you destroy the ability for people to go hunting. For those of you in Toronto, if you're not hunters, it's a huge economic boon in rural Ontario to have the hunters come for duck season or deer hunting. If you go up north, you've got the moose hunting. What you need to do is ensure that when you have duck hunting going forward, they have the wetlands for them to protect.

So not only are the wetlands being destroyed and the hunting being affected, which is affecting the local economies, because hunters spend a lot of money when they're in an area on food and the local economy and buying their supplies, but the other aspect you have to look at—you've seen a lot of flooding increase over the years. You can talk about climate change and such, but you've got to look at what's going on with our wetlands. Wetlands are the natural filter, the natural sponge for our environment. When there's an abundance of water, the wetlands are what are sucking up the extra water. We've destroyed so many wetlands in this province and paved over them, and now it's causing tons of flooding.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's right.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you. The minister of—he was the Minister of the Environment and now he's the minister of everything: Jim Bradley. We call him the minister of the Toronto Blue Jays here, but we're not too sure. He says I'm right: We've destroyed too much of our wetlands, which is causing a lot of flooding.

Now add this invasive species phragmites into the situation. Not only is man destroying the wetlands, but now we have an invasive species doing about the same thing. So not only is it going to affect our hunting and fishing—well, hunting, and I guess fishing opportunities as it grows out into the deeper waters—and destroy our agricultural land, but it's also causing undue hardship to

our areas with the increased amount of flooding going on. That's the other importance of what's going on in the area.

I'm just going to touch on a few letters from different stakeholders I've received regarding the Invasive Species Act as I continue on my debate. I'm going to talk about Long Point Region Conservation Authority. They're in Toby Barrett's riding; they're also a bit into my riding, the watershed. We just had Christmas dinner there on Friday night in Delhi: pork schnitzel and cabbage rolls. It was a beautiful dinner out in Delhi. The member from Oxford, Ernie Hardeman, was also present because he's also part of the watershed.

Anyways, the Long Point Region Conservation Authority has been actively working on the phragmites issue for the last four years. LPRCA, Long Point Region Conservation Authority, owns 850 acres of marsh west of Port Rowan called the Lee Brown Marsh. The conservation authority uses this marsh to provide recreational hunting opportunities to people from across Ontario and the United States. There, you see that the bonus of having strong areas for the hunting community is that not only do we attract people from Ontario, but we're also attracting people from the States, and with the dollar going lower, it's more of a benefit for them to come here. So it's a great economic boon for rural Ontario.

The LPRCA staff has developed a technique that appears to be successful in controlling phrag. The challenge is that neighbouring marshes are being choked out by phrag, either because they lack resources or knowledge. The Nature Conservancy of Canada—which is a great organization, I do say—has now been talking to them about working together to map out the phrag in order to ensure that they're able to deal with the implementation of this act when it gets implemented. They need to get the best practices of the technique. Areas are already starting on developing the best practice techniques to deal with phragmites. It's very concerning because, again, they will be spraying water.

Research shows that phrag is so invasive, typically in freshly disturbed sites—ditches, construction sites—that it chokes out native vegetation. In fact, it's so thick that some species like turtles get trapped in it and die, while it provides no nesting habitats for ducks and other birds. If you get rid of the ducks, you get rid of the hunting opportunities and you destroy ecotourism. You can just imagine the impact that it has on areas, let alone the local environment.

I also have a letter from Ontario Nature. I hope they get an opportunity to speak at the committee level. They have quite a few concerns with regard to the bill. I'll outline a few of their items:

—“The bill is not precautionary or prevention-oriented.

—“The bill does not reflect or support a pathways approach to prevention.”

We agree on two things. Ontario Nature and the Progressive Conservatives usually aren't on the same two pages on anything, but so far we're two for two on what we think with regard to this bill that need to be fixed.

“—The bill does not outline a science-based approach to risk assessment and decision-making.

“—The bill is punitive and presents fairness issues.

“—The bill would prevent swift eradication measures.”

Those five points put out by Ontario Nature, I don't have a problem with. I think they're valid concerns which we need to hash out in debate, but we also need to sit down in committee and come up with detailed changes to this legislation so that it's more fair and balanced.

I might go back to Ontario Nature, depending on my time, because time goes quickly when you're speaking for an hour. I'm just going to scoot through this quickly—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No, you're doing a good job.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Is that all right?

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Oh, I've got so much more stuff to talk about here.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I do have letters from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, which the minister talked about.

“On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters ... its 100,000 members, subscribers and supporters ... we would like to take this opportunity to applaud the government ... for the proposed Invasive Species Act.”

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister of Rural Affairs, I visited their complex in the summer. It's a beautiful, beautiful place. We need a spot like that down in Elgin county. I think we have some plush areas that—

Hon. Jeff Leal: We can work on that together.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We should work on that, definitely, because we are “hunting central” in southwestern Ontario, down in Elgin county.

Going back to his letter:

“While we do not yet have details of specific proposed regulations, the OFAH would like to ensure the consequences of the new legislation do not negatively impact sustainable heritage activities such as fishing and hunting. As you know, angling and hunting conservationists are very much a part of the solution to the threats posed by harmful invasive species—not part of the problem. It is imperative that the risk assessment process for both species and pathways ... will be transparent and incorporate social and economic considerations alongside ecological considerations. The OFAH looks forward to actively participating in policy development processes. The OFAH would also like to recommend that the Ministry of Natural Resources ... pay heed to lessons learned through the public consultation and implementation of the Endangered Species Act (e.g. the backlash associated with powers for inspection).” Mr. Speaker, those powers are still in this bill today. There are going to be some problems unless we deal with the inspection powers that this bill gives out. It's black and white here, from the hunters and anglers of this province.

It's not just MPP Jeff Yurek from the PC caucus saying so; I have backup on this. “Anglers, hunters, outdoor enthusiasts and landowners play an important role in invasive species management through public reporting. It is important that we continue to engage these groups in stewardship and avoid discouraging their participation because of fear of legal implications and property interventions.

“For over 20 years, the OFAH has worked in partnership with the MNR to deliver the Invading Species Awareness Program. The Invading Species Awareness Program takes a proactive”—I love that word, “proactive”—“public education approach to preventing the spread and/or introduction of invasive species. We have had tremendous success in engaging millions of Ontarians on the issues of invasive species and how they can prevent their spread or introduction.”

I think those are strong words from the hunters and anglers of our province, and I'm proud that they're such a strong organization. Really, Mr. Speaker, when I talk to people, hunters and anglers have got to be one of the best—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: —and farmers—have got to be one of the best environmentalists this province has ever seen. They care about their environment, they care about the resources, and we need to help them in their activity to ensure that they are not only able to carry out their hunting and fishing activities, but they're also supported in ensuring that our wetlands are secure and strong and our environment is strong.

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I also have comments from the Ontario Forest Industries Association on the Invasive Species Act: “So far, the response to the act is really positive ... [The] forest industry has a pretty good track record for invasive species management.” Their concern, of course, is the emerald ash borer and Asian longhorn beetle, which are huge threats for ash, maples and other hardwoods, and also impact southern Ontario regions. They would like to see those species addressed as priorities once this act is implemented. It's my hope that it's one of the top species that will gain government focus once this act is proclaimed and put into law.

Their only flag with this bill—and I brought it up earlier: The intent is great, but the implementation of the act and its efficacy will depend on whether or not there's adequate funding. MNRF has such an important mandate. It's chronically underfunded, as I mentioned earlier. Our success with invasive species will rely on our ability to prevent them from entering or establishing, and eradicating them once they become a problem. Both will require tremendous resources.

I also want to just add in a little bit from outside of the country, what's going on in the rest of the world—just a quick tidbit. If you get the chance, you should look up the New Zealand Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. They introduced this act in 1996, so New Zealand is way ahead of where Ontario is, or Canada, for that matter.

Their basic rule is that anybody wanting to introduce, import, develop or manufacture a hazardous substance or new organism into New Zealand must apply to the Environmental Risk Management Authority in order to do so. Basically, New Zealand has brought forward something I think we might need to talk about: You can't bring anything into the province unless it's approved. That should decrease the amount of invasive species in the province, and in the long run be cheaper for the people of Ontario in dealing with invasive species, if we can actually prevent them from coming into the marketplace in order to deal with the hazards of invasive species.

As I mentioned in other speeches since I've been here, I don't want this bill to be time-allocated. I don't want this government to come forward as soon as we come back in February after the Christmas break and bring forth a time allocation motion which will halt the discussion on this legislation. I think it's very important that we have it to give the members on this side of the House, the opposition, the time to talk about the Invasive Species Act. This is where rural Ontario is. It's how the electorate decided: Rural Ontario is in the opposition, and this bill affects rural Ontario. If the government came forward and limited the debate for the members of the opposition in order to possibly ramrod this legislation through committee and into legislation, possibly causing problems and not hearing the voice of rural Ontario, I think that would be troublesome for the people of Ontario.

Then once we get into committee, to time-allocate committee—I mentioned earlier today about Bill 8, how, in the middle of committee and in the middle of the discussion of the amendments and having a discussion back and forth and votes, their time allocation motion shut down all debate, and every amendment was deemed read. So all you did was vote on the next amendment, which totally took away from the reasoning behind the committee. I'd hate to see that occur with regard to the Invasive Species Act. Going forward, we need to have proper legislation, proper discussion and debate, and we need to reach out to the people of Ontario to hear what is actually going on with regard to the Invasive Species Act.

There are many species out there which are at risk—or invasive species; I'm getting my species mixed up here. But there has been talk about zebra mussels. Zebra mussels cost around \$90 million a year, the government is saying, in this province. That's because they got in through the ballast water. We're not even talking about what other costs the zebra mussels have. I don't know if that government cost includes Hydro One having to deal with the zebra mussels on their parts of the waterways that they have to clean up. Those costs get tallied on to our hydro bills at the end of the day.

We can talk about sea lampreys, phragmites, the emerald ash borer—you've just got to look at Chatham-Kent, at the devastation that occurred down there—the Asian long-horned beetle, the Asian carp.

Mr. Speaker, while reading on this bill and trying to learn more about invasive species, I thought it was quite interesting, the types of aquatic species that are invasive. It really shocked me. Lake Erie is full of perch. I really enjoy yellow perch. I went to Wheatley a few weeks ago to talk to the commercial fishermen—amazing yellow perch—and I was informed at that time that white perch is an invasive species. I did not know that. White perch isn't as tasty as yellow perch—that's probably why they're invasive—but apparently white perch has a little more fat in it. It has adapted to the system, but it's an invasive species. I thought that was kind of neat to know. Rainbow smelt is an invasive species. Some of these, I haven't even heard of—common carp, of course. We also have the Asian clam. The rusty crayfish is an invasive species, and the spiny water flea and zebra mussel.

The cost of the zebra mussel—this is interesting. It wasn't really the zebra mussel, but I'm just talking about aquatics when we go into an area. We were going to build a bridge in Dorchester—the government was building a bridge—and they found a few mussels in the waterways there. What they had to do was tag these mussels and watch them for a year and then move them. They put off the project of building a bridge for over a year. That was a species that wasn't at risk. That was a species that we want to protect and look after, but the bureaucracy of protecting those mussels not only delayed the project but cost.

If this is transferred to the Invasive Species Act and we find these zebra mussels, and we have a way to destroy them but we're going to have to wait to study them and tag them and treat them—we've got to make sure that that process is clear at the end of the day, when we get this legislation passed.

The fishhook water flea: I haven't even heard of half of these things.

But that's just the fish. I mean, when you look at the plants—I don't know how many of us would see these aquatic plants every day and not think they're invasive species. The yellow iris—that's not an aquatic plant, but the yellow iris is an invasive species. The watercress, the purple loosestrife—I've heard a lot about that.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Purple loosestrife is a very big problem.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes, and I think they've given up on trying to deal with it. It's just such a problem.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Did you get a special permit, though? Because I know you can't use any herbicides or pesticides; they're gone.

Hon. Jeff Leal: My son did it. It was a summer job.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I hope you paid him well.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I sure did.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The narrow-leaf cattail is an invasive plant, the yellow iris, the European frog-bit, the European water chestnut, fanwort—you know, I think I have fanwort in my ponds to feed my fish. I have koi fish in a pond in my backyard, and I'm pretty sure this fanwort is sitting there, and it's an invasive plant. However, it must be a good plant, because it's keeping my fish alive.

Water lettuce: That stuff spreads like crazy in your ponds. Yellow floating heart—anyway, my point is that invasive species are on their way. They're going to migrate into our area, whether we like it or not, via the natural path of plant or animal progression or via the man/woman ways of getting things into the area.

I'm hoping that this government will use this bill and make amendments to make it proactive, so that when we bring products and animals into this area, we deal with them appropriately and don't let them become invasive species and become problems.

I look again at Asian carp. We need to ensure that these carp are gutted on the trucks coming into Ontario, because these carp, from what I've learned, can live through anything. You can put them on ice, and you think they're dead. You get them in the marketplace, take them home, and they can still be alive. The problem is if there is a truck crash and they get into our waterways via the culverts and such. Or, with new regulations going on board, if they're turned around at the border because they're not eviscerated and the company that's obviously creating an illegal act decides just to dump them, are they going to dump them in our waterways and incorporate them?

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We need to ensure, working with our American friends down to the south, that proper methods are in place to ensure that invasive species do not come into this province, and the best way to do that is to become proactive, to reach out. Take the example brought forth by member Toby Barrett from Haldimand-Norfolk. He went down to the States. He testified before Senate committees. He gave them ideas of how Ontario and Canada can work with them to ensure that we keep these invasive species out of Canada.

We need this to happen from the government's side. They need to incorporate the opposition's ideas, let us be part of the process and stop these invading species, because there's only one Ontario. There's only one environment out there. This is a serious problem, not only socially but economically, that we face in this province. We need to take the necessary steps going forward to ensure that we officially have preventative action on invasive species. Deal with what's already here. Ensure that people are treated fairly and not charged huge fines or huge costs because of no fault of their own. There are invasive species that are going to be classified on their property. Let's work together and ensure that, together, we have a strong environment, which will, at the end of the day, produce a healthier Ontario and a strong, vibrant economy. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to have a quick chance to speak to Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species. I'd like to thank the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London for his comments, and also for highlighting the work done by my predecessor, Jerry

Ouellette, from Oshawa and for reminding us about his extensive work that he has done not only on invasive species but in terms of prioritizing outdoor activities and sharing, over his time here in the Legislature, his deep knowledge of issues impacting natural habitats and our communities that enjoy them.

I certainly come to the Legislature with a different background, but I do come with—my undergrad was in biology and a focus on biodiversity. It's a welcome opportunity to speak to that.

Also, coming from Oshawa, I look out my back window and I don't have to look very far: I see the Second Marsh Wildlife Area, which, if you're not familiar, is 123 hectares of coastal wetland in Oshawa. It's adjacent to McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve and to Darlington Provincial Park, nearly 400 hectares in total, and it's one of the largest publicly accessible waterfront spaces in the GTA. So, of course, it is a priority to preserve and protect over 380 plant species and 305 bird species, plus lots of little critters, mammals, insects, amphibians and reptiles. So the Friends of Second Marsh, and Oshawa as a greater community—their volunteers work very hard to combat invasive species and make sure that this is an area that we can enjoy for many years to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: What a pleasure to speak on Bill 37, our government's bill, the Invasive Species Act. I very much enjoyed the remarks from the member from Elgin-Middlesex—a very knowledgeable overview of so many of the different invasive species. You talked about the great environmental protectors out there, the farmers and the hunters, and I would like to add urban fly fishers to that list of great environmentalists.

I too, as a fly fisher, am concerned about invasive species and the effect that they're having on rainbow trout populations. I had the pleasure to be on the Nottawasaga recently, and I hope to get onto the Maitland River during the break at Christmas to do a little steelhead, because those rainbows come out of the water up the river—we call them steelhead—and I'm starting to think that my inability to hook into one of these fish has less to do with invasive species and more to do with my lousy technique.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Hear, hear!

Mr. Arthur Potts: Yes, thank you very much.

We've all seen the Asian carp videos on YouTube. They're funny. But it belies a very important issue behind the fact that they are taking over and devastating fisheries, and that's why this bill is so very, very important. If you've seen that particular YouTube video, the gentlemen are water skiing behind the boat, and they've got pointy little nails and things on there, and as the carp are coming out of the water, they're actually trying to catch them on spears and such. It's an extraordinarily funny piece but, like I say, it does belie the fact that there's a very important issue behind all this.

I used to have a wood waste processing business up in north Toronto, processing wood waste from around the

world, and I'm sure it's just coincidental that nearby where we had our operations was the outbreak of the Asian beetle. I certainly hope it didn't rise as a result of us bringing in wood and crates and processing them in the neighbourhood. The Asian beetle was a such serious, serious detractor to the forests in Toronto. I hope we've been able to contain it, and I hope this bill will allow us to get on top of these issues fast, quickly, and eradicate them before they become more serious threats.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to thank my colleague the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London for his exceptional leadoff on behalf of our party. I also want to thank him for mentioning the member for Haldimand—Norfolk, Mr. Barrett. I've got Hansard in front of me from back on February 26, 2014. When speaking about the previous bill, he talked about the admirable goals that the bill has. Obviously, the member has been a tremendous advocate that action be taken on Asian carp.

One of the things I note in his speech in February is the fact that he uses the statement, "These invasive species don't abide by borders," and I think that's very important. He also encouraged the minister at that time to talk to our American counterparts on invasive species. I'm thinking about letters that I wrote to the previous minister about cormorants, and about a meeting that I had in my riding with my other representatives, MP Gord Brown and Senator Bob Runciman. We meet regularly with our American counterparts.

I remember meeting with New York Senator Patty Ritchie about all of the things that that state does about cormorants. I wrote the previous minister encouraging him to sit down with our American counterparts and look at what they're doing, and to try to mirror some of their efforts. I have to say that I was very disappointed by the last paragraph in the letter from the previous minister, when he said, "While we are aware that cormorant management actions in New York may disperse birds to Ontario colonies, we respect New York's decision to manage cormorants for their purposes."

I just believe that we have a role to reach out across the border, just as the member for Haldimand—Norfolk suggested with Asian carp. Whether it be Asian carp or cormorants or any other invasive species, we can't have our heads in the sand. These species know no borders. We have to sit down with our American friends and work on a coordinated strategy to deal with some of these issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A pleasure to make comments following the address by the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London. I don't know if the members present know that this member has the largest invasive species in Ontario in his riding, and that's that former military submarine that they use as a tourist attraction out there.

The minister and the member had enunciated a lot of the invasive species, everything from the zebra mussels

to the emerald ash borer, the purple loosestrife, the phragmites, the Asian carp. It's already cost municipalities in my area hundreds of thousands of dollars on the emerald ash borer. We were one of the first that got hit with that many years ago, even before I was on city council, and I was there for seven years. We're still trying to clean up and make up and replant after that borer went through our area. I don't know if we'll ever get caught up.

In our area, of course, we have the border, and we're always hearing about truckloads of Asian carp; the drivers get busted at the border. A lot of these fish—they're on ice; they haven't been eviscerated, so they're still alive, almost in a coma-like state. If they were ever released into our waterways, that would devastate the sports fishing and the commercial fishing industry. I think of communities such as Kingsville and Wheatley and Port Dover. Those economies would be in big trouble without the commercial fishing industry.

The phragmites: In our area we have the tall prairie grasslands. A lot of people confuse phragmites with the tall prairie grasses. They want to use it in their backyards; they think it's an ornamental grass they want to plant. It's very scary.

I applaud the minister. Whatever we can do to combat invasive species in Ontario would be a good thing for all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London now can reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I'd like to thank the members from Oshawa, Beaches—East York, Leeds—Grenville, and Windsor—Tecumseh for their comments. I didn't get any questions, so that's kind of nice. I can just speak to the rest of the bill.

Before I finish up, I just found a note that I wouldn't mind adding in with regard to the Asian carp, which I think is very important. Basically, you've got to look for physical connections for how they get into our area. The Chicago area waterway system that feeds into Lake Michigan is the key way they're going to enter our Great Lakes system.

There's enough food and habitat in our Great Lakes for these fish to survive even throughout winter. They're not even going to compete with zebra mussels—there's another predator—with regard to other fishes in the environment. There are suitable spawning conditions for these fish in up to 57 Canadian rivers. There are lots of wetlands for them to inhabit.

It only requires as few as 10 adult females and a similar amount of males for a greater than 50% chance of an annual succession of spawning in our Great Lakes. That's only 20 fish—10 males and 10 females—and we're out of luck with these fish. The spread will be rapid. Within 20 years, even Lake Superior will be affected. Walleye is going to be one of the main fish that is going to be hit with regard to these Asian carp, and yellow perch.

I know how much the minister of everything—the minister of the Toronto Blue Jays—likes his yellow

perch. I'm hoping that this government will work with the opposition and ensure that not only can we protect the yellow perch in our Great Lakes but the economies throughout Ontario and ensure that our hunters, anglers and our wetlands are strong.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. This House stands in recess until 6:45 p.m.

The House recessed from 1802 to 1845.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Government
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of Ontario

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 8 December 2014

Lundi 8 décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 décembre 2014

The House recessed from 1802 to 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (MAKING ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFER), 2014 LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE TRANSPORT (ACCROÎTRE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE EN ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 1, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / *Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélatrice à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.*

Mr. Michael Harris: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I seek unanimous consent to complete the remainder of my leadoff on Bill 31.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga is seeking unanimous consent of the House to complete his leadoff speech on this bill. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Kitchener—Conestoga has the floor.

Mr. Michael Harris: I thank the members for allowing me to continue my leadoff on Bill 31. I appreciate that. I've got about 47 minutes to entertain folks tonight, and I'm planning on taking that entire time.

I know that, unfortunately, in night sittings you don't have an opportunity to welcome guests to the Legislature. Of course there's no one here tonight, but there are a few significant folks—

Miss Monique Taylor: We're here.

Mr. Michael Harris: Well, of course, you guys are here.

I wanted to introduce my family at the first opportunity, to be watching tonight at home: of course, Sarah and Brayden. Murphy is well attuned to the TV. Lincoln may not be able to understand what's going on, but he's tuned in; he's tuned in for sure. I know Rafi is listening

as well tonight probably to finally get some common sense.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think he's already sleeping.

Mr. Michael Harris: Rafi is asleep.

I know my mom and dad are watching tonight, too. Don and Marg Harris from Guelph. They're tuned in, so I want to make those introductions before we get started.

Speaker, I left off, obviously, and I was beginning to address some important steps, as well as some concerning missteps that Bill 31 takes towards making Ontario roads safer.

We all know—and many have first-hand experience in the past of course with a myriad of distractions faced by the modern driver, and we have all heard the stories of the impact distracted driving can cause. That's why it's the government's responsibility—it's our responsibility as legislators to ensure our laws reflect the startling realities we see on our roads.

I imagine we all think we have an idea of what distracted driving is, but for the purposes of our discussion, I think it's important to understand exactly what we are talking about. According to the RCMP, "Distracted driving is a form of impaired driving as a driver's judgment is compromised when they are not fully focused on the road. Distracted driving qualifies as talking on a cell-phone, texting, reading (e.g. books, maps and newspapers) ... watching videos or movies." That's according to the RCMP.

As the term "distracted driving" applies to the legislation we are discussing today, we have to look back to Ontario's initial hand-held device ban from 2009. Here, we can see that the law makes it illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or email using hand-held cellphones or other hand-held devices. The law also prohibits drivers from viewing display screens unrelated to the driving task, such as laptops or DVD players, while driving, of course. It's pretty much along the lines of the RCMP definition. The bottom line is, if you have to grab it to read it or speak to it, you can't and you shouldn't do it at all. While the law addressed these concerns in 2010, the fact is that the faster pace at which our world moves has meant that the prevalence and temptations towards further incidents of distracted driving have only grown since that time.

In fact, this is how the CAA puts it: "Despite all efforts, distracted driving has become more prevalent on Ontario roads, putting motorists, passengers, cyclists and pedestrians at risk." When you look at the numbers, it paints a disturbing picture and certainly calls out for further action to address this growing problem head on.

According to the OPP, 78 people died from distracted driving-related crashes in 2013—78 fatalities in one year because we can't put the phone down.

1850

The CAA, who have done yeoman's service in researching and supporting effective legislation in this area, have further indicated that driver distraction is a factor in about four million motor vehicle crashes in North America each year and that 20% to 30% of all collisions internationally involve some sort of driver distraction. In Ontario specifically, the OPP have upped that number, indicating that distracted driving is a causal factor in 30% to 50% of traffic collisions here in Ontario.

A few other numbers from the CAA to consider: Consider this comparison indicating the increased likelihood for drivers engaged in distractions to be in a crash or a near-crash event compared to non-distracted drivers. For instance, text messaging or texting on a cellphone: 23 times more likely; talking on a cellphone: four to five times more likely; reading, like my colleague in the House is right now: three more times likely; applying makeup, which I don't believe anybody is doing here tonight: three times more likely; reaching for a moving object: nine times more likely; dialing on a hand-held device: three times more likely; talking or listening on a hand-held device: 1.3 times more likely. Here again, Speaker, we see a disturbing trend in the numbers that call out for action. That's why we support the principle of increased fines for distracted driving.

As today's legislation proposes fine increases of up to \$1,000, we do look to support that increase. But more importantly, we want to ensure that this is part of a bigger picture, a picture which includes demerit points on licences and emphasizes the need to ensure that all drivers understand the importance of focusing on the road while they're driving because, given those numbers we just heard, it doesn't seem that everyone is, in fact, getting the message.

To that end, Speaker, I think it's important that we recognize the work of our traffic safety partners and their continued work to get the message out. There's the Seriously ... Just Drive! campaign, made up of motorsport enthusiasts who are passionate about cars; expert community figures from the OPP; Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving; and real-life families who have been tragically affected by the dangers of distracted driving.

The Seriously ... Just Drive! campaign features student and public events focusing on the 15- to 26-year-old demographic and corporate programs targeting 26- to 45-year-old professionals who could influence their kids and the younger generation. Events will allow students and adults to try their hand at a driving simulator which puts attendees through a three-minute distracted driving scenario. Each attendee who successfully completes the distracted driving course will be gifted with items supplied by the community partners—not a bad deal, Speaker.

The campaign just took its next step in teaming up with belairdirect insurance company to promote a newly released mobile app to Ontario drivers in a bid to curb

distracted driving. It's called the bump'r application and is an example of the different ways and products available to make real inroads into the incidence of distracted driving. Bump'r automatically senses and responds to incoming calls and text messages when a vehicle is moving and offers a solution to the growing issue. Depending on the settings that the user chooses, bump'r can redirect calls or voice mail, temporarily block various kinds of alerts and notifications, and send a pre-selected response to incoming text messages, all without requiring the driver to touch the phone. This is the type of important awareness work that is an essential piece to the overall approach to significantly curb the tragedies that ensue from our modern-day addiction to driving distractions.

Then there's the work of our friends at the CAA, along with their Traffic Safety Coalition partners: CAA South Central Ontario, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ontario Provincial Police, 407 ETR, Arrive Alive, Road Today, the IBC, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the city of Toronto, Sunnybrook, and the Motorcycle and Moped Industry Council.

Speaker, CAA and the Traffic Safety Coalition have launched an annual distracted driving awareness campaign called "Missing" aka "Promise to Focus on the Road," with a stated aim to educate drivers about the range of distractions that lead to collisions and what can be done to minimize these distractions. That campaign also includes an interactive online element to be done at home, at the desk or when pulled over. The campaign encourages users to make their promise to focus on the road and share their commitment with friends, family and co-workers via social media.

So to that end, I would encourage those listening and watching to log on to caasco.com/promise or check out #CAAFocus to join me in taking the promise. It only takes less than a minute and involves little more than your pledge to stop driving distracted. Here's the rest of the pledge, Speaker: "For my friends, my family and my future. I promise to focus on the road. I will not answer my cellphone, respond to texts, or let other distractions pull my focus away from the road or letting other distractions to pull my focus away from the road. No distraction is worth my life."

As I've said, I've made the promise, so I'm hopeful we can get the word out in the Legislature and make them reach their goal of 4,000 promise makers by the end of the week. They're currently about half-way there.

I've just provided a couple of examples, but these are the types of forward-thinking awareness-creating initiatives that are an essential part of the overall strategy to directly address the concerns and impacts of distracted driving.

As I referenced earlier, another key part of that strategy has to be the introduction of demerit points as an effective deterrent tool to curb driver behaviour. I don't know about you, Speaker, but when it comes to demerit points, I think of insurance rates. As we know, insurance companies review the driver abstracts that indicate a driver's demerit points; of course one can expect higher

annual rates if one accumulates enough demerits. Instead of just one fine for the incident itself, that's like a fine every year, and given the notion of paying annual increases, it may give more than a few pause for thought the next time they go to answer that buzz.

It's surprising to realize that Ontario is one of only three provinces and territories to have absolutely no demerit penalty for distracted driving violations. That's why I was glad to see in the news reports and in our ministerial briefing on this bill that the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act would be imposing a three-demerit-point penalty for convicted motorists. The problem is, Speaker, just as my predecessor and caucus colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London found in the previous version of this legislation, Bill 173, there's absolutely no mention of demerit points in it. I would challenge the minister, or anyone else for that matter, to even point to the word “demerit” in the bill, because it's simply not there.

I would have thought in the weeks and months since we debated Bill 173 that the minister would have addressed this confusion, as my colleague presented a compelling case back in April for immediate action. Yet here we are in December, some seven months later, and there's still no demerits, still no mention in the legislation and still a lot of misleading information in media and on ministerial backgrounders indicating the legislation would include demerits.

You see, Speaker, the simple fact is that, again as the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London pointed out over half a year ago, the minister doesn't require legislation to implement demerits. In fact, he can introduce demerits himself any time he wants through regulation, an order in council. So what is most concerning is that here we have a minister who says that he wants to take action on distracted driving, and yet this same minister has waited months to take the simplest first step, which I feel would have a major impact on people's driving habits.

The concern is further that, given the impacts of distracted driving and the numbers I quoted earlier associated to the impacts of distracted driving—78 deaths; half of all traffic collisions—what is the minister waiting for? How many accidents could have been prevented while we spin our wheels reading headlines of demerit penalties that just simply are not there?

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While we debate this proposed legislation in the House, I feel it's incumbent on the minister to avoid further delay. Don't wait for the bill to pass, because you don't have to. Act now to introduce demerits and have a real, immediate impact on the occurrence and impacts of distracted driving here in the province. I can tell you, our concern grows on this side of the House with every passing day that this minister refuses to act.

That said, again I feel that demerits—if ever implemented—along with awareness campaigns and, yes, the increased fines that we find in Bill 31, can be an effective strategy to address distracted driving here in Ontario. But before I move away from the distracted driving aspects of the bill, I did want to talk for a minute about the multi-

tude of ways that people can abide by the legislation and still achieve communication from the driver's seat—and no, I'm not talking about hand gestures.

Two words: hands-free. As long as you set up your hearing device—Bluetooth, earbuds, what have you—ahead of time and you ensure that your device is mounted in or secured to your vehicle so that it cannot move or obstruct your view of the road, you're good to go—talking, that is, not texting. So too with GPS. As long as you have your global positioning system device properly secured to your dashboard, not impeding your vision of the road, you are within the law. Again, I would encourage everyone who has not already done so to get your hands-free system ready to roll as soon as possible to ensure no further temptation to put that phone back in your hand when your hand should be on the wheel.

On a final distracted driving point, it is worth noting legislative exceptions that allow for hand-held emergency 911 calls and allow police, fire department and emergency medical services personnel to use hand-held wireless communication devices and view display screens in the normal performance of their duties. That is an exception.

Speaker, when it comes to this bill's enhanced measures to address impaired driving, we all agree that those impaired, whether from alcohol or drugs, should not be driving—period. But as we know, the concerning reality is that people continue to take this risk despite the potential impacts and despite the already well-established penalties—penalties that include the also well-established and quite effective ignition interlock program. While scientific evaluations of interlock programs have repeatedly found reductions in repeat offenders among interlock program participants of up to 90% over those of DWI offenders who were under suspension over the same period of time, the fact is that there are those who continue to put lives at risk. This bill's call for licence suspension or car impoundment for non-compliance with the ignition interlock program further addresses those who would choose this unfortunate reality.

While it is an unfortunate reality that there are about 13,000 drinking and driving convictions recorded annually in Ontario, ignition interlock is an important control measure that is prescribed for those convicted of an impaired driving offence under the Criminal Code of Canada—that is, over a 0.08 blood alcohol level; and those suspended for registering a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.05 to 0.08 three or more times in a five-year period. The ignition interlock device is like an in-car breath screening device. It will prevent a vehicle from starting if it detects a blood-alcohol concentration over a pre-set limit of 0.02. The device would be located inside the vehicle near the driver's seat and connected to the engine's ignition system. As I said earlier, it works as an effective deterrent measure with regard to those repeat offenders, and I think there is certainly room to support further steps to help deal with those who choose to contravene the program.

When it comes to Bill 31's direction with regard to drug-impaired driving, I will repeat that we all agree that

those impaired, whether from alcohol or drugs, should not be driving at all. Ontario is one of only three jurisdictions in Canada that currently have no sanctions for drug-impaired driving, and so the fact that the issue is finally addressed here allows Ontario motorists to have the protection that other provinces already benefit from.

Again, we talk about our road safety partners, and certainly we must commend the work of MADD Canada. It is MADD that estimates that just less than 50% of all fatal collisions involved either drug and/or alcohol impairment. We already have laws to deal with the impacts of drunk driving, so this bill proposes to fill the void in Ontario to take on the impact of drugged driving.

Specifically, the bill will allow for someone's driver's licence to be suspended for three, seven, 30 or 90 days if the driver fails a roadside test and the police officer, trained in standardized field sobriety testing or as a drug recognition expert, reasonably believes that their ability to drive is impaired, depending on the level of impairment. Even as we support the direction toward dealing with the occurrence of drug-impaired driving, the fact is that there will be concerns moving forward as government has yet to introduce any reliable, scientific testing for drug impairment, leaving the imposition of penalties open to question and possible legal challenges.

While government has spoken about examining testing procedures in other jurisdictions, until some verifiable type of roadside breathalyzer for drugs is proven valid and accurate, we will require further detail if this legislation moves on to committee as to how and when a driver is determined to be drug-impaired for the purposes of this legislation.

Speaker, as I said off the top, this legislation does address a whole slew of issues when it comes to road safety, and while most of these issues are directed at motorists alone, we have some sections dedicated to the mutual responsibility of both motorists and bicyclists to ensure the safety of both.

Before I go into the work my colleague, who is here tonight, from Parry Sound-Muskoka put into pushing the government to permit cyclists to ride on the paved shoulders of our highways, I would like to commend him for his outstanding work. I know he didn't get proper recognition in the leadoff, and I wanted to make sure this House and the viewers at home knew the hard work that my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka put into this necessary change.

I would like to explore another one of the more publicized aspects of this bill in taking aim at the issue of dooring. As some may be new to the term, to be clear, dooring describes the very dangerous and unpredictable collision that occurs when a driver opens their door into the path of an oncoming bicycle. We see and hear of the growing incidents in Toronto and the GTA, but certainly the problem is an emerging hazard in many of our urban settings where bicycles and parked cars intermingle on a daily basis.

Bill 31 proposes to deter instances of dooring with the increase of fines from \$50 to between \$300 and \$1,000

for drivers found guilty of dooring. I'm going to repeat that last part because it's important: These increased fines are proposed for drivers while there is no mention of the shared responsibility for all to be aware of their environment. Much in the same way that drivers must be aware of any potential hazards when opening their vehicle, to have success in preventing further incidents and accidents I think it is vital that cyclists too are actively aware of vehicle blind spots and, when cycling after dark, take steps to do what they can to make themselves visible to drivers. At the very least, I feel to be effective, a full spectrum dooring strategy should include both fines and awareness to ensure all parties are prepared to exercise caution before they walk out the door. Again, much as it is important to ensure appropriate penalties for dooring incidents, it is equally important to increase awareness of the shared responsibility of all drivers, whether they operate cars, trucks, motorcycles, ebikes or bicycles, to be alert to all potential safety hazards as they navigate our roadways across Ontario.

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Further, Speaker, I will mention, as the former transportation critic noted in the spring, that there are valid questions surrounding the deterrence effect of this bill, given the current environment where most instances of dooring, in which a driver is negligent, end up in court anyway. While we are discussing the government's proposal of fines up to \$1,000 for dooring incidents, the fact is that in most instances of dooring, the legal process already provides a significant deterrent in the form of much higher damages awarded from negligence lawsuits. The deterrent is already there, Speaker, so we do question how this new fine will further affect driver behaviour.

That said, as I noted a few minutes ago, Bill 31 gets it right in endorsing the work of my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who spent much time and effort in this House during private members' debate to allow cyclists to ride on the paved shoulders of highways. The key ingredients to today's legislative call for the right of cyclists to enjoy travel on the paved shoulders of highways can be found in the private member's bill, Bill 137, the Paved Shoulder Construction and Bicycling Act. As I said, my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka spent much time and effort in ensuring this right was written into law. In fact, Bill 137 represented his third time introducing the legislation, in 2013, proposed legislation that had originally passed second reading back in 2010, so it's good to see his work finally recognized with the parameters spelled out in Bill 31 today.

Speaker, Bill 137 called for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincial highways when those roads are being paved or resurfaced, as well as an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act to make it actually legal for cyclists to ride on the shoulder portion of the highway. While it is common knowledge that this already is a common practice, the law prohibiting bicycles on highway shoulders goes widely unenforced. It's important that we get the law right to avoid confusion down the road.

As my colleague put it back in 2013, or back behind me now, "By creating paved shoulders alongside our provincial roadways, we would be providing more opportunities for individuals to safely cycle, run or walk around this province. Many people express reservations about cycling out of fear for their personal safety, which is a result of lack of infrastructure that supports active transportation and outdoor activities." I think it's pretty well established that there are many benefits to be gained from creating more opportunities for individuals to participate in physical activities throughout the province. That's what Bill 137 proposed to do.

Of course, I would note that the government's cycling strategy for the province does recommend paved shoulders and greater biking infrastructure across Ontario, so it is somewhat curious that we see no similar call in the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act. Perhaps given the common ground we share and the obvious benefits to health and safety, this is something we can explore further, possibly in committee.

As we look to commend the recognition of the work by our representative from Parry Sound—Muskoka, we should note that the dedication shown by my colleague from Simcoe North to have motorists slow down and move over is also front and centre in Bill 31. It's been well established in Ontario for quite some time now that it is the law to slow down and move over if you're approaching a stopped police cruiser, fire truck or ambulance along the highway with its red or blue lights flashing. The law requires it, and motorists for the most part are well aware of their responsibilities and the importance of taking the extra step to slow down, move over and allow emergency personnel to perform their vital duties safely and effectively.

The unfortunate fact is that police, fire and ambulance aren't the only ones called to roadside vehicle mishaps and therefore placed in these vulnerable situations where motorists are passing by at high speeds within just a few feet. The truth is that both motorists and tow truck drivers risk injury or death during tow truck assistance calls as, currently, passing vehicles are not required by law to slow down and move over as they approach. That's why my colleague from Simcoe North introduced private member's bills on two separate occasions seeking amendments to the Highway Traffic Act extending the "slow down" law to tow trucks.

I will note that despite the fact that my colleague's efforts have so far not been adopted as law, the approach he has proposed is common sense. In fact, the CAA, which came out in full support of the previous private member's bill, has done a members' survey in which 83% of respondents indicated support for extending the "slow down" provision to tow trucks. Add to that the fact that petitions supporting CAA's efforts on this front have garnered over 8,500 signatures in support.

Of course, there are many of these examples that are borne out. One of the most tragic reports came in 2012 in the Windsor area, when a local tow truck driver was killed when struck by a car as he was changing a tire at

the side of the road. Police reports later indicated that the tow operator was where he should have been at the time. Over in Innisfil, a 45-year-old tow operator was struck by a passing grey SUV in 2013, when he was standing at the back of his flatbed lifting a car that had broken down on the 20th Sideroad. The operator was quoted as saying, "I thought I was dead. That person hit me at full speed with no brakes." About a week later—I'm pleased to report—that he was back at home with his wife and children, bruised and battered, nonetheless, and in need of the protection the "slow down, move over" provisions would allow.

"Slow down, move over" for tow truck laws already exists in five Canadian provinces and 47 US states, so this would be bringing our province up to speed, so to speak. Everyone deserves a safe environment in which to work, and given the ability to prevent potential tragedies for both tow truck operators and motorists alike, I again commend my Simcoe North colleague for his important work on his private member's bill.

I also want to quickly state my support for some of the shared-responsibility direction we find in this bill when it comes to pedestrian safety. Much as I expressed concern earlier for the need to encourage shared responsibility when it comes to the interactions of cyclists and motorists, I'm pleased to see that similar concern addressed when it comes to pedestrian crossovers.

Specifically, while Bill 31 requires drivers to remain stopped at pedestrian crossovers or school crossings until the person crossing is completely off the street—as is already the case for school crossings with attendants—it also speaks to the need for shared responsibility. I'll read from the explanatory note here to drive home a point: "Drivers must stop before entering the crossover and not overtake another vehicle already stopped at the crossover; pedestrians (which includes persons in wheelchairs) must not enter a crossover and into the path of a vehicle or streetcar that is so close that the driver cannot stop." That's shared responsibility, Speaker. It's heartening to see it all here, because I think if we put the onus on all who travel or walk across our roads we have a much better chance of maintaining safety than if we just place one group against another. Again, I feel it's important that we recognize the responsibility of all road users for safety, and Bill 31's direction on pedestrian safety does just that.

So now that I've spoken to some of the provisions we see in Bill 31 that I feel are commendable, I do want to spend some further time looking at where more of our concerns lie. There is no one in this House who doesn't know what I talking about when I mention concerns with Ontario's medical licence review system, the bane of many constituency offices. There is no shortage of representatives who will tell you of the long-standing concerns over issues where healthy, diligent drivers have their licences stripped away from them for months at a time while they are forced to put their lives on hold. While the program and the growing constituent concerns cry out for change, we question just what exactly is being proposed to fix this broken system.

Specifically, Bill 31 proposes changes for the current requirement of only doctors and optometrists to report to the registrar of motor vehicles anyone over the age of 16 who suffers from a condition that may make it dangerous for the person to drive. Rather than imposing those requirements strictly on doctors and optometrists, the bill calls for new regulations to outline who is required to report to the registrar. Unfortunately, the bill doesn't go so far as to spell out exactly who that might be, which I, again, find puzzling.

This conceivably means that the minister will be able to empower a broader range of professionals to report drivers who they think could pose a road safety risk. Just who are we talking about here, Speaker? We are calling on, perhaps, physiotherapists or chiropractors to report; perhaps the government is considering reporting by dentists, oral hygienists and the like. Or how about accountants, CGAs? Just who is the minister going to call upon to report people who, in the opinion of the unnamed professional, perhaps shouldn't be on the road?

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It's this lack of accompanying detail as to who the minister will be able to empower to report medical conditions to the registrar, or how that decision will impact on the system as a whole, that leaves us with many questions. We will need more details as we move forward with the bill, to ensure a workable system that protects the safety of both Ontario motorists and pedestrians without unnecessarily impacting those who are medically, physically and mentally capable of driving.

I've had many constituents who have emailed and called our office, and I'll give you an example of just one: "It is now four weeks post-surgery. I am absolutely fine to drive, and my doctors have not restricted me in any way. I have two children, aged three and four," this constituent writes.

"This suspension has not only cost me my freedom to come and go as I please, it also cost me the ability to get to and from work for the week leading up to surgery.

"I have inquired countless times to the MTO medical suspension line and have had no luck.

"Each time I have called I have waited no less than 40 minutes in the queue.

"When I called last week the woman at the MTO informed me that it was taking so long because I have epilepsy. I do not and have never had epilepsy! I tried to tell her this but she didn't seem very interested in anything I had to say....

"I feel that it is an absolute disgrace considering this suspension should never have been submitted in the first place."

There it is, in one well-worded email: a system that forces able-bodied drivers to wait extended periods, often past the six- to eight-week timeline that the ministry suggests, while their work and social opportunities remain out of reach due to their inability to have their licence restored or get behind the wheel. Speaker, that's just one example, and I'll tell you, many of the offices I have heard from have dealt with many similar examples.

Of course, this brings me to another concerning part of the bill that again provides so little detailed information that we're left with a long list of questions regarding the government's intent. I speak of Bill 31's introduction of a vehicle inspection centre system. While we have been made to understand the stated reasons for this new system's inclusion in the bill, after our too-long experience with Drive Clean there has got to be a better way of dealing with these concerns than introducing some sort of new mandatory inspection and mandatory fee program.

We do understand that the automotive after-market industry has long supported increasing the number of interactions that drivers have with automotive specialists, due in most part to the fact that approximately 40% of recommended light vehicle maintenance and repair is postponed or abandoned every year, posing significant risks on the roads. There are concerning stats that show that \$14 billion worth of required work is underperformed, including half a billion dollars in brake work alone.

While those are certainly concerning numbers, given the Wynne Liberals' and previously the McGuinty Liberals' handling of the Drive Clean program, you can't blame us for being skeptical of any attempt by this government to legislate more mandatory costs and inspection programs onto the shoulders of Ontario motorists, especially when, for the most part, the structure and framework of this new vehicle inspection system are left to the regulations, while the legislation itself provides no checks or balances on what it will look like.

I'll just give you a taste of what Bill 31 suggests here: "Under new section 100.2, the minister may establish a program for the inspection of vehicles and the issuance of certificates and stickers and other types of proof of inspection and may appoint a director of vehicle inspection standards"—we'll call him a czar; the new czar of vehicle inspection standards—"to administer the program." Further, the bill proposes that, "The minister may enter into agreements with service providers to assist in operating the program. The minister may also enter into agreements to authorize persons to operate vehicle inspection centres and to authorize service providers to enter into such agreements.

"The director"—or czar—"of vehicle inspection standards is given broad authority to issue directives governing certificates, inspection procedures and requirements and equipment and performance standards under section 100.7."

I'll tell you what it sounds like to me, Speaker. It sounds like we're getting ready for the release of Drive Clean 2.0, the sequel. As far as I'm concerned, we've been there and done that and are still paying for it. I don't know anyone who really wants to go back there again. In fact, as opposed to adding another layer of mandatory inspections, we in the PC caucus have been calling on the Liberal government for years to scrap Ontario's redundant Drive Clean program, which has veered into becoming, in fact, an illegal tax.

I also want to mention Bill 31's direction for extended length B-train trailer combinations, another aspect of the

bill. Just so we know what we're talking about here: In the simplest terms, B-trains are those transport trucks we see consisting of two trailers linked together by a fifth wheel. Currently, the Highway Traffic Act allows the prescribed combinations of the units to have a maximum length of 25 metres. Bill 31 would amend that length parameter to a maximum of 27.5 metres. So we're talking about two and a half metres in extension.

I understand that the Ontario Trucking Association has long advocated for this extension of B-train trailer combinations to accommodate a more comfortable sleeper berths for drivers and animal strike guards—think of moose bumpers etc. While Ontario is the first Canadian jurisdiction to introduce this proposed extension, I think we can understand, given the stated reasons from the OTA, that the need for this provision to accommodate the evolving job of truckers in 2014 is necessary.

I've only got about seven minutes left. For those viewers at home who may want to take a quick break, we've got only about seven minutes left.

I want to address, obviously, some more of the concerns I have with the bill. But I'd like to take a few minutes to look at what's missing in the bill. Specifically, I was very hopeful, when we heard about the coming introduction of a reintroduced bill to amend the Highway Traffic Act, that we would see the minister take the opportunity to finally address roundabout rules and testing when the bill came out. However, I checked it from top to bottom, and it was nowhere to be found. It's unfortunate, because there is a very real need for rules to be spelled out for motorists as the prevalence of these traffic circles grows.

In recent years, Ontario has seen a growing number of roundabouts created to ease the flow of traffic at intersections in communities across the province. There are now nearly 40 roundabouts in Waterloo region alone, and plenty more are being built across the province. As their presence increases, like in Lambton, so too do questions of safety, increases in accidents, and concerns of consistency of rules for drivers and pedestrians navigating their way through and across these traffic circles.

It is not just me sounding the alarm bell. The CAA, who worked with me to support my private member's bill—which I will discuss in a second—has done surveys which indicated that only 32% of members were familiar with how pedestrians should use a roundabout. A follow-up survey this past September indicated that three quarters of respondents said drivers with roundabouts in their communities should be tested on navigating a roundabout during their road test, and 89% were supportive of greater education for road users on how to use a roundabout.

That's why I introduced the Safe Roundabouts Act: to give the government the ability to establish clear, uniform rules for roundabouts throughout Ontario. That's why I've also called on the government to examine roundabout procedures for G2 and G road exams.

My bill would have enabled the minister to "make regulations establishing rules of the road that apply to roundabouts" and stated further that, before making a

regulation, the minister would "conduct a study about the safe use of roundabouts" and "must consult with members of the public." Finally, my bill would have required the minister to table a progress report in the assembly every year until the regulation is made, which I hope he will do sooner rather than later.

In fact, before Bill 31 was tabled, and given that we've had a new Minister of Transportation installed since the introduction of my bill, I wrote directly to him to share the direction of my Safe Roundabouts Act and to ask for concrete action steps to clear up ongoing confusion over consistency of rules for drivers and pedestrians.

Again: With nearly 40 roundabouts in the Waterloo region and more across Ontario, the continued blinders-on approach is short-sighted at best and negligent at worst.

There is no doubt that the government's continued support for including roundabouts in Ontario's infrastructure, while refusing specific rules for these intersections in Ontario's laws, will have far-reaching impacts if allowed to continue.

Speaker, in the minutes that I have left I do want to spend some time on the new powers for Highway 407 and the long-awaited tools for municipalities to collect unpaid fines.

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I will begin with the latter, as municipalities have long awaited the ability to put some teeth into their fine-collection system that will prevent countless millions—likely over \$1 billion—in unpaid fines heading out the door, leaving municipalities holding the bag. The region of Waterloo wrote to me about the need for collection powers back before the election. I've since had discussions with our regional chair and do share his concerns for the municipal inability to see that violators pay their fines and municipalities catch up on runaway unpaid penalties.

Bottom line: Bill 31 would ensure that those in default of fine payment for traffic or parking offences would no longer be allowed to renew their licence plates while also making it easier for the municipal government to pursue out-of-province drivers for offences.

Speaker, there we have it: both significant steps and, I would submit, some missteps on making Ontario roads safer. From driving distractions to drug-impaired penalties, fine collection powers to yellow chrome buses, which I didn't get an opportunity to address—perhaps I will later—as I said, there is a little something here for everyone. So after taking an in-depth look at the parameters of this bill, I will say for now that while I support many of the principles that are at the heart of the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act, I look forward to the opportunity to ensure our concerns and unanswered questions are addressed as we move forward toward a more positive and timely piece of legislation that will effectively protect the safety of all motorists, cyclists and pedestrians alike.

I will say I definitely want to thank the road traffic partners for all of their work that they've done, whether it

be the CAA, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police—the list goes on and on.

I know I've only got about a minute left. I did mention the chrome bus aspect of it. I will bring it back because I did find it was a bit weird. I'll say "weird" because while media reports suggest that the ministry backgrounder on Bill 31 indicates that to address ambiguous wording the proposed legislation would also clarify that only school buses could be painted chrome yellow. I know we've got a caucus colleague who drives a yellow car. It appears it may be chrome. She asked me if she'd have to paint it. I did question the minister on that and I did hear some good news to her, that she would not need to paint her car if this legislation were to pass. She's happy with that.

There is a section, 3.1, that states: "If all or part of a bus" registered in Ontario "is painted chrome yellow, the bus shall also display on its front and rear the words 'school bus' and on its rear the words 'do not pass when signals flashing.'" Now, I'm not sure if that's what the ministry is referring to in their backgrounder but I do wonder why we're even going here. I think it's quizzical that we are referencing the very specific colour chrome yellow.

I asked the minister about this in committee. As I mentioned, I brought a number of pictures of yellow vehicles as examples, and do you know what, Speaker? None of them was chrome yellow. So my question: What happens with buses painted a shade lighter or brighter than chrome? Are these vehicles allowed on our roadways? What if someone attempts to paint a bus—like the Griswolds'—a different shade of yellow, let's say, butter yellow? But when it comes out as closer to chrome than butter, does an owner face charges because he has no school bus designation or "do not pass" wording on the front or rear?

I guess my time is coming to a close here. Perhaps we'll pick that last little bit up on the next two minutes to wrap it up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to talk about the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act. Last week I had a Mr. David Loney, a small business man from my riding, who came to see me. Mr. Loney owns a couple of big rigs; you know, those big trucks that haul all over the country. He knew that we were talking about road safety in the Legislature and he wanted me and all of us to know that the most dangerous of all—to all of us and for the drivers of big rigs in northern Ontario—is not distracted driving. It is the winter road maintenance. He tells me that the roads in Ontario are so poorly maintained that he and his drivers heave a sigh of relief when they reach the Manitoba border. He actually promised to bring me a picture next time he drives through the border in the daytime to show me the difference. He says it is like night and day. Manitoba roads are clear; the ones in Ontario are covered with ice, snow and slush.

The roads are so poorly maintained in northern Ontario that he will actually slow down his business and

lose close to \$40,000 rather than risk having his trucks involved in an accident in the winter, by taking them off the roads for a couple of months—just do the minimum he has to do. This is terrible news. We are talking about an experienced, professional driver who would rather lose \$40,000 worth of business than drive our highways in the winter.

Bill 31 is about making Ontario's roads safer. I have an idea: How about we improve our winter road maintenance? That would go a long way toward making Ontario roads a whole lot safer.

If you figure what he does to our economy when he parks his truck—multiply this by a lot of parked trucks that are afraid to drive on Ontario roads and you'll see why our economy is sputtering.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I just want to reiterate to the members in this House that for the last 13 years Ontario has been ranked either first or second in North America for road safety. But, in saying that, we also know that there's more that we can do to improve our road safety programs, and we are doing that with the combined legislation of Bill 31.

I was actually delighted to hear my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga really support a lot of the parts of the bill that dealt with some of the increased fines and with distractions. I really wish I could speak more than a couple of minutes on this.

I just wanted to talk about distracted driving, which, as we know, is continuing to increase in issues regarding more fatalities. In fact, in 2016, if we continue our current trend, we will actually exceed deaths on our highways from drinking and driving. It will be distracted driving that's the worst offender there.

I just really wanted to state that some of the proposed legislative and regulatory amendments that are contained in Bill 31 regarding distracted driving include increasing penalties by increasing the existing fine from \$300 to \$1,000, adding three demerit points for distracted driving through regulation, and also adding a distracted driving prohibition to the existing novice driver's licence conditions under the graduated licensing system through regulation. So it really affects my teenage son and his friends. These proposed increases in fines are going to be among the highest fine ranges in Canada, and I'm proud of that.

I also just wanted to speak a moment about dooring. Certainly dooring has been an increased topic of discussion. The Ministry of Transportation is proposing regulatory changes that would apply demerit points to convictions for distracted driving but also increase the number of points applied for dooring.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Applause.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, and thanks for the applause there, guys.

I would like to commend the member for Kitchener–Conestoga on his remarks, as he went through and gave

us quite a summary of Bill 31. I had to stay tuned right to the very end to find out if we were supporting it, but that's good, because I wasn't sure. I came in in the middle of it. It was 47 minutes, and it was a great summation of the facts as he knew them.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It took him a whole week to deliver that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. He also, of course—and well said—paid tribute to the member for Simcoe North and, of course, the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka for all of the work they have done over the years in their private members' bills, to either highlight the issues about the paved shoulders, the “move over” law and, of course, safe cycling, which we all agree with. I don't ride a bicycle much anymore, but I have to deal with them.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Maybe you should.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I should. Somebody said I should. The stationary bike—maybe I should. Who said that? The member from London—Fanshawe?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: No.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Anyway, somebody down that way said that. Maybe I could start out with a stationary bike.

Anyway, I have to deal with them. When I am driving the car, I've got to deal with bicycles. I'm always leery of opening the door in traffic—more since I came to Toronto. I never had that back in Lambton county, but more so down here. It's crazy out there, but then I don't need to tell everybody that who lives in Toronto.

He talked about the great investments—more investments in highway safety and in road safety, which, obviously, with infrastructure we could use certainly, and a number of the other ones.

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Oh, the medical licence review: That's something that comes up in my office numerous times. I can validate that as well. A number of people have no idea why they're not driving anymore. They come in and they have a doctor's bill of health that says they're okay to drive. Still, it's very difficult to get your licence back. I just talked to a lady last night at 10 o'clock. I gave her a call at home and she was telling me about her issues.

Anyway, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One more question and comment.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I want to make a point of order informally to the member for Sarnia—Lambton. It was not I who made that comment but the member from Perth—Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: You were thinking it.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: No. Just to clear that up for you.

You know, what is interesting about this bill is that I looked up some provinces that actually have the fines. BC: Hand-held devices, plus novice drivers using hands-free equipment, is \$167. Alberta: same kind of idea, \$172. Saskatchewan is \$280. Manitoba is \$199.80. Ontario currently is about \$280. Quebec is \$115 to \$154.

New Brunswick is \$172.50. Nova Scotia is \$164 to \$337. PEI is \$250 to \$400. Newfoundland is \$100 to \$400. Yukon is \$250. Northwest Territories: \$100. Nunavut has none.

What this bill is proposing is, we're going from \$280 and we're going to increase that to—

Miss Monique Taylor: Up to \$1,000.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, it says, “is liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$1,000.” That's quite substantial, as we can see, compared to the other provinces. If we're using this as a deterrent financially, it certainly is a deterrent.

However, there may be ways to also inform the public and make people aware of how dangerous hand-held devices are—maybe commercials, maybe apps on the hand-held devices that children, that youth of today, are using for communication tools—and make them understand that, yes, the financial piece is punitive; however, the result of doing that is even more punitive when your life is at stake. So I would encourage education and awareness on hand-held devices to help protect our future generation and stop this distracted driving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to thank those who chimed in on my last 47 minutes—I could go on for another 47, I know, but I'm out of water—but definitely the member for Nickel Belt; the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, the member from Cambridge; my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton; and of course, more recently, the member from London—Fanshawe.

I think she finished off by saying “more awareness.” Of course, that is exactly what it is going to take. We can have all of the fines and penalties entrenched into law, but it is the work of us as legislators, as well as our driving safety partners, to communicate the need for better road safety. As I mentioned earlier, you are 23 times more likely to get into an accident if you're texting—23 times more likely. That tells you right there.

I think it is important that we definitely thank our Traffic Safety Coalition partners for their extensive work on publicizing these new changes. You can think of the drunk driving campaign, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and how that has impacted our roads, as we see now distracted driving actually being more the leading cause of deaths on our Ontario highways rather than impaired driving. That's great, but we've got some work to do now on distracted driving. I need to thank those folks, like the CAA South Central Ontario; the Ontario Provincial Police, of course; 407 ETR; Arrive Alive; Road Today; the IBC—they do some great work in promotion of better driving habits; the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police; the city of Toronto; Sunnybrook; and Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving.

These are real-life families that have been impacted by impaired driving, and we'll now need to focus on distracted driving and the impacts it's going to have.

I would like to thank the members tonight and those watching at home for Bill 31's comments. I will look forward to further debate on such a bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It always gives me great pleasure to rise in this chamber on behalf of the great people in my riding of Windsor West. I'm looking forward to soon spending the holidays there, although I have to admit that I just might miss these night sittings—might.

Mr. Michael Harris: Or not.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Not.

I want to take a moment and thank my colleagues from Kitchener–Conestoga, Nickel Belt, Cambridge, Sarnia–Lambton and London–Fanshawe for their previous comments on Bill 31. I think they've all done a wonderful job of bringing up some of the positives in the bill, and also sharing some of their concerns.

It's my first opportunity to rise to speak to this bill, Bill 31, the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act—which is, in itself, a mouthful—also known as Making Ontario's Roads Safer. I think the title is a great place to begin an examination of this bill, and I hope to add some meaningful deliberation in my 20 minutes this evening.

As the title indicates, this is a very comprehensive bill. It actually combines two previous pieces of legislation that were before the second session of the 40th Parliament: Bill 34, the Highway Traffic Statute Law Amendment Act, also known as municipal fine collection, which attempted to give additional tools to municipalities seeking to collect defaulted traffic fines from drivers, and Bill 173, the former Highway Traffic Amendment Act, or Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe, which included provisions to enhance pedestrian, driver and cyclist safety. If this wasn't ambitious enough, this piece of legislation we are discussing and debating today, Bill 31, also includes new provisions to deal with drugged driving, as well as changes to the Highway 407 East Act. I'll return to these two additional provisions very shortly.

In a bill this ambitious, I think it's only right to speak to both its positive and negative aspects. I think we can all agree with the intention of this bill: to make Ontario roads safer.

As many of you know, one of the busiest border crossings in North America—in fact, two of the busiest border crossings in North America—run directly through my riding. We have a tunnel and a bridge, and they connect Windsor to Detroit. It's a major trading hub and a major part of the city's identity. It also poses some unique challenges. For instance, just this past November, in fact, a computer glitch on the US side of the border caused major delays and cost companies on both sides of the border well over \$1 million. These delays took place all day long through two of the busiest intersections in my riding. I was unfortunate enough to be tied up at one of them waiting for these large rigs to cross the border. There was a great expense to the companies they were driving for.

Speaking through the lens of the unique characteristics of my riding will be a good addition to this debate in much the same way my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin was able to walk us through the unique character-

istics of his northern Ontario riding during his excellent deliberation on this bill about a week ago today. Being able to listen to all of the members of this chamber and hear about how legislation impacts their ridings is truly something I appreciate, and I am glad I have a chance to rise and participate in these discussions.

I'm also privileged to speak today as the NDP critic for community safety and correctional services, a role I take very seriously here at Queen's Park although it often sees me end up in jail, sometimes with the member from Niagara Falls. But don't worry, Speaker, we were just visiting.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You got out.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: They let us out.

I think I'll start with the provisions pertaining to road usage for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. Primarily, these provisions increase penalties for prohibited behaviour. Traditionally, this is meant to act as a deterrent to such behaviour, and if used properly it can actually work quite well. Examples of deterrents in Bill 31 include stiffer penalties for distracted driving, which specifically prohibit display screens and hand-held devices. Among other things, these provisions include increasing the range of fines and adding demerit points for infractions. Generally, these are good ways to deter the behaviour, and I do think distracted driving is something we should work to reduce in this province. The OPP concludes that distracted driving has become the number one killer on Ontario roads, and often campaigns against these infractions, along with the CAA.

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It's tempting, given the more demanding, fast-paced lifestyles many employers demand from their employees, to try to continue to be productive while we are commuting. I think the key here, Speaker, is to remember all of the cognitive skills required by one to drive. It's truly a very impressive skill that requires tremendous attention, but it's integrated into so many of our routines that we often forget this and try to do a number of other tasks while we drive.

Another example of a deterrent in this bill is the new provision to prohibit drugged driving. This bill allows for escalating licence suspension for driving while drugged. This is proven when a police officer trained in administering a standardized field sobriety test believes the driver is impaired. I'm interested to know what this test entails, however, along with how it is or will be developed to ensure accuracy in these tests. The two examples I just outlined, being stiffer penalties for distracted and drugged driving, are generally good examples of deterrents, pending some clarity over a few provisions. I think we want to make sure that the punishment fits the infraction, and increasing penalties in these two areas is a good example of something that could work.

A number of stakeholders have spoken in support of these provisions, including Mothers Against Drunk Driving. As a mother myself, I appreciate the work and advocacy of this organization. Mothers Against Drunk Driving indicates that out of 60,000 charges laid for

impaired driving in 2012, just 1,126 charges were for drug impairment. Now, it's not my intention to assume that there are more people driving drugged than we lay charges on, but I do believe we should be doing all we can to enforce the laws and deter people from breaking them.

Along with drugged driving and distracted driving, the bill adds new cycling provisions. As many of my colleagues in this chamber know, Windsor is quickly becoming a major cycling destination, and I know our newly elected council and mayor will be working hard to incorporate cycling into the city's urban and rural landscape. In fact, in 2011 the city of Windsor received an inaugural award from the Share the Road Cycling Coalition. This organization recognizes communities that actively support cycling, and it's right that Windsor is included as one of them.

Since 2002, citizens in my riding have been taking part in an annual bike across the Ambassador Bridge, from downtown Windsor across the border to Detroit. The annual Bike the Bridge event, also known as Tour de Troit, continues to grow in success and received over 6,000 participants in 2013.

Another young but successful cycling event in Windsor is the Tweed Ride. This event sees cyclists of all ages and skill levels coming out dressed in—you guessed it—tweed for a bike ride through the city.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Come on. It's true.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's an impressive event. Everybody is very nicely dressed.

The efforts of local bike vendors like City Cyclery are crucial in organizing these events and putting cycling on the urban agenda of the city. Windsor is in the final stages of connecting the Windsor Loop, which is a 42.5-kilometre circular loop that connects the city around its perimeter, joining city neighbourhoods and providing access to the Trans Canada Trail. Windsor's waterfront trail is particularly beautiful, and follows the Detroit River through town, through Malden Park and under the Ambassador Bridge. My federal counterpart, Brian Masse, has also strongly pushed for a bike lane to be included in the plans to build a new crossing between Canada and the United States, so that you can bike right into another country before making your way back to Windsor. That would be a great addition for Windsor.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Let's all do it, the whole Legislature.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: You should. You should all come to Windsor and bike across the bridge—unless you're afraid of heights.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, which I am. I'm out.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: As you see, Speaker, my community takes cycling seriously. I want to make sure cyclists are safe, whether they're sharing a rugged single-track path with hikers, a multiple-use pathway with joggers or a roadway with motorists. The bill we are debating today, Bill 31, adds new cycling safety provisions.

The bill indicates that drivers must allow a distance of one metre when overtaking a cyclist. Here we have another good provision of this bill.

The bill allows cyclists to have a rear flashing red light at night—currently not allowed under Ontario law. It's about time this changed, as we see many of these flashing lights on bicycles today, and the law should not penalize cyclists for being proactive about their safety. Ask yourself how many times you've seen a cyclist with these red lights and were thankful that they had them—or you were biking and had a flashing red light yourself.

Bill 31 permits cyclists to ride on paved shoulders of all unrestricted highways and allows for contraflow bike lanes on one-way roads. The latter is an interesting provision, a good idea originally proposed by my former colleague Jonah Schein. My colleague from Parkdale—High Park has also been a strong advocate for cycling safety throughout the years, in particular calling for the one-metre rule.

Some of this is reflected in this bill, and I do thank the members opposite for this. I think it's great that the Liberals are finally listening to New Democrats, and we see some of the positions the NDP has been advocating for over the years.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There is hope.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: There is hope.

I look forward to this government adopting many more of our ideas in the months ahead. In fact, I hope they increase their level of consultation before they implement change from here on in, with both members of the opposition and the general public. This is a theme I will return to in the latter part of my time today.

That being said, there are a few provisions regarding cycle safety in this bill that I find a bit odd; rather, I would say that they are severe. The bill increases the maximum fine for not having a bike light from the current \$20 to \$500. It also replaces the \$20 set fine for not having reflectors or lights with a general penalty of \$60 to \$500.

Interjection: It's worth more than the bike.

Miss Monique Taylor: That's more than the distracted driving penalty.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yes, these are very steep increases.

I do think that cyclists need to protect themselves at night by increasing visibility, just as I believe drivers must be aware that they share the road with cyclists during the day and at night. But I do think we must reflect on this theme of how to deter prohibited behaviour. Again, the increase in fines is meant to act as a deterrent, but in these circumstances, I think there is also a way to incentivize our desired outcome, which, in this case, is making our roads safer. We need to ask: Is this penalty the proper deterrent to achieve the desired outcome of seeing all cyclists bike with a light at night? What need is there to increase the maximum fine for not having a bike light to \$500? I think we need to explore other ways we can deter unsafe behaviour for not carrying a bike light or, better yet, look for ways we can incentivize cyclists to

carry a light. I think all members of this chamber would agree that cyclists also want to be safe and have a vested interest in carrying a bike light.

If the penalty for not having a light on a bike is going to be dramatically increased, are we also going to see more attention paid to theft of bike property? Between March and July of this year in Windsor, police received 226 bike theft reports. This is up from 168 reported in the same time period last year. In July alone, from 2013 to 2014, bike-related theft went up 53%. It's important to ask how many lights and bells were stolen in this time frame. How many of these crimes were actually reported? If we're going to start fining cyclists large sums of money for not having a light on their bike, I sincerely hope we're going to crack down on bike theft and the theft of bike-related items like lights.

Moreover, I'm concerned that many cyclists in my riding will be shocked to learn of these changes, especially if they learn about them when they are receiving a \$500 fine. Will cyclists be educated about the changes in this bill? I sincerely hope we don't see cyclists being made an example of by receiving the new maximum fine for not having a light on their bike before reasonable attempts are made to educate cyclists on these new fines. If my colleagues in the chamber think I'm exaggerating here, ask yourself, how many of you knew that rear red lights on bicycles are currently prohibited?

These two provisions may be an instance where a deterrent of this nature may not be appropriate or, at the very least, could be augmented with other efforts. I would hope that this government is open to discussions about ways to incentivize cyclists to install lights, as well as educating them on changes in the fine structure. This can really increase the success of achieving all of the objectives of this bill.

Moving along, another portion of this bill requires that drivers wait until a pedestrian has cleared the roadway before proceeding to encroach upon a crosswalk, rather than simply waiting until they are no longer on the driver's half of the roadway. What this bill does not do, however, is mandate truck side guards, which ignores constant calls from the Ontario coroner. New Democrats have long called for this federally, as well as provincially. While the Liberals seem to finally be listening to some New Democrat ideas, it seems this one in particular is being ignored.

Another portion of this bill enables regulators to outsource vehicle inspection centre systems to a private operator. My colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin spoke at length to this section of the bill on December 1, and I will reiterate some of his points here today.

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First and foremost, you are creating a body that will not be overseen—that is to say, will lack proper oversight. How many times do we have to learn this lesson, Mr. Speaker? What I'm talking about here is the creation of the new vehicle inspection centre. The administrator of this system is not an agent of the crown, and as such would not be subject to normal oversight by the govern-

ment agencies committee, the Ombudsman or the Auditor General unless the service agreement with the ministry allows for this oversight. We need accountability and we need oversight in Ontario now, more than ever.

As I said in my introduction, Speaker, Bill 31 is a very large bill, and I assure you I'm working my way through all aspects of the legislation I'm hoping to speak to tonight.

Now we finally get to my thoughts on consultation, as I promised you. I know members on both sides of the chamber were waiting eagerly to hear me speak on this.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I am, I'm just going to say.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I can tell.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I should first contextualize this theme with a discussion of the portion of Bill 31 that weakens the notification provisions to align the Highway 407 East Act with the 407 ETR plate denial process. This bill removes a requirement that obliges the registrar of motor vehicles to notify a driver 30 days in advance, via registered mail or bonded courier, that a plate or a licence will not be renewed due to failure to pay the tolls.

Also—and this is crucial—this legislation removes the legislated obligation to consult with the public before raising tolls. At long last in my speech tonight, we've reached the point on limiting public consultation. I would like to spend some time to unpack this concept.

In 1997, Highway 407 opened as a toll highway and in 1999 it was leased for just under a hundred years to a private operator in exchange for \$3.1 billion. To illustrate how this investment appreciated in value for the private operator, in 2013 alone, the 407 Express Toll Route reported revenues of \$801.2 million.

In 2012, the Ontario government enacted the Highway 407 East Act, which will govern the extension of the 407 when completed. This project is a P3, operated and maintained by, for the most part, the same private companies that currently operate the 407.

In 2012, under the same budget negotiations, New Democrats backed a position that called for a requirement for public consultations to be undertaken prior to a 407 toll increase. Bill 31, the bill before us today, removes the requirement for public consultation. Why? Why is it a good idea to remove a provision mandating public consultation before the increase of a user fee? The Ministry of Transportation claims that this will be replaced with a regulation calling for automatic inflationary increases. However, the ministry would be allowed to set whatever rate it wishes via regulation.

I'm still relatively new to this chamber, but I do believe that under these terms, the increase may not be subject to debate among democratically elected officials, nor would it need to be put directly in front of the public through some form of consultation. Any increase would be decided by the ministry, limiting consultation and public inquiry.

The people in my riding are no strangers to sudden toll increases without consultation. Just last year, they saw bridge tolls on the Ambassador Bridge increase from

\$4.75 to an even \$5, making it one of the most expensive border crossings in the province. At the time, the only Canada-US crossing that was more expensive was the Fort Frances-International Falls bridge, and this may still be the case.

I think back to the sudden adjustments many students in both Windsor and Detroit would have had to make, as many cross over daily to attend school in the country opposite. These increased fees are something people need time to account for in their financial planning. I also think about the many businesses in Windsor that rely on the Canada-US supply chain and how this must have increased their operating costs.

However, these voices and concerns were not heard, because the bridge is privately owned and can raise fees without public consultation. I think the new provision in Bill 31 would resemble this to a certain extent. I can appreciate the government attempting to add stability to cost increases by claiming that a regulation will be added to set automatic inflationary increases, but will they consult the public to set those increases? How will this be decided, and over what period? Will there be contingencies in place if the increases are found to be steep?

I notice, Speaker, that I'm running out of time, so I just want to reiterate that I think the most important point in this is that any of these items should have public consultation. We see time and time again with the Liberal government that they're stifling the debate and the conversation with the public. I think that it's important to have that input.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to thank the member from Windsor West for her comments.

I'm proud to stand here because, as many of the members of the House will know—I mentioned this earlier today in my inaugural speech—I started the Share the Road Cycling Coalition in 2006 following the death of my husband in a tragic accident.

I'm pleased that the member mentioned the Bicycle Friendly Communities program, which is one of the programs that we started at Share the Road. In fact, it was launched in Windsor in 2010 at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario meeting in order to bring recognition to communities who have succeeded in doing well in cycling, and Windsor is definitely one of those. There's some work left to do in Windsor, I know, having grown up in Windsor and understanding the infrastructure, but well done for Windsor for, I think, it's a bronze now in the Bicycle Friendly Communities program. I thank the member also for her comments.

The other reason I'm proud to stand in this place and speak to this legislation is because—and the member noted this—it's an amalgam of ideas. I think, arguably, we're at our best when we share good ideas. No one in the House owns them; not one party owns them; we share them. This legislation is an amalgam of the ideas of the members for Parry Sound-Muskoka, Parkdale-High Park, Simcoe North, to name a few. I know that the

member from Parkdale-High Park, who unfortunately isn't with us this evening but is here in spirit, was an ardent advocate for cycling and proposed, as a private member's bill, the one-metre safe passing law. That is now part of this legislation. The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, of course, has done tremendous work on paved shoulders in this province, and that, too, is part of this legislation. I think, as we can see, we're at our best when we work together.

When I was at Share the Road I was part of the coroner's review into cycling deaths. Many of the recommendations of the coroner's review in 2012 are contained in this legislation. I think it's a hallmark day in Canada when we can say that we have the makings of a one-metre safe passing law—only the second province in Canada to have it. There are more than 30 US states that have the one-metre safe passing law. It has been demonstrated to make a real difference in terms of safety, so I'm pleased to stand in this place and speak to Bill 31.

I thank the member opposite for her comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It gives me pleasure to rise and speak to the comments from the member for Windsor West. I noticed in her remarks that she was talking about consultation. Since you have been here—and I've only been here a short time; you've been here maybe a shorter time—when have you ever seen this with this government? Consultation is not in their vocabulary. They certainly don't listen to us. They don't listen to their stakeholders, and they keep cutting off debate on important pieces of legislation.

Look at what they did to the horse racing business a number of years ago. They cut it off at the knees. There was no consultation there.

Look at what the Minister of the Environment, endorsed by the Minister of Agriculture, has done to the Ontario grain farmers with the neonics controversy. Despite what the farmers are trying to do to correct that problem, they haven't even listened to what could be a solution to that problem. Many farmers have adjusted their planters to help with dust control when they're planting their crops in the spring. That has not been listened to by this government.

They have also changed the formulation of some of these chemicals to help with dust control. Again, they were not listened to by this government.

I really hope there's some consultation going forward, but it certainly hasn't been shown in these recent months. We've also asked for consultation on different bills, bills that the previous speaker, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, mentioned. Again, it's not there.

I do hope that the government will start listening, not only to us, but to people who are involved in industry, people who are involved with traffic control, instead of pushing these bills through and thinking that they know best for everybody, because they certainly don't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand and comment on the member from Windsor West. Her analysis of this bill was thorough. She didn't get through all of it because it's actually a very big bill. A lot of the changes that are contained within this legislation have been a long time coming.

I just want to reflect back. The member from Windsor West, Lisa, and I served on the Ontario Public School Boards' Association for a lot of years, so we always pivot back to education. Education is the prevention piece. It's the smart place to invest dollars, but as she also mentioned, the enforcement and the oversight are the needed components to any legislation.

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Any government can come forward and have great ideas contained in a piece of legislation, but if they're not going to uphold them, if they're not going to enforce them and if the oversight is the missing component, then you might as well be writing on blank pieces of paper for all that we're—

Ms. Cindy Forster: And they enforce nothing.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes.

The other key component, I think, which should resonate with the entire House—the member from Windsor West touched on the public consultation process. We are seeing a diminishment, a watering down, of public consultation, which is incredibly worrisome. It's an emerging trend. It has actually accelerated under this majority government. So I think that she was right, in her role as an opposition member, to raise that as a concern as regards Bill 31.

The coroner's review, as was already mentioned as well—we are in this place in time because laws and legislation and regulations have not been upheld or enhanced or enforced by this government. Therefore, we are looking at coroners' reviews on too often a basis.

Quite honestly, I think the member raised—she spoke to her riding. She spoke to the importance of this legislation to her riding. I hope that the government, going forward, takes those words to heart.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just want to add my few comments to this debate on Bill 31, the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act.

I listened to the member for Windsor West carefully and also to the member from Kitchener—Conestoga previously. There's a clear indication that everyone in this House supports many parts of this bill. If you look at the bill carefully where it's making improvements to this act in terms of impaired driving; drugs and alcohol; distracted driving; medically unfit drivers; truck, vehicle and bus safety; pedestrian safety; cycling safety; collection of default Provincial Offences Act fines; and Highway 407—all of us agree with those things.

But the most important thing about this bill is that it incorporates the ideas of members of all parties. The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka knows it was his private member's bill that was discussed. There are other

members like that. That's why I have an interest in this bill: because the residents of my riding asked me to bring that bill on distracted driving because the parts of the act that existed at that time were not enough to deal with distracted driving.

In fact, an innocent person got killed in my riding because of a distracted driver. It left a family, a husband and kids, without a mom, someone that they cherished very well. To be honest with you, my interest in the distracted driving bill is that the previous legislation was only brought in 2010, and people were not observing the rules of the road that were in that act. So it was my view that the fines were too low to really create that impact that we need with drivers. A major link that was missing was that distracted drivers were not being punished with demerit points. We have learned from drunk driving that when we instituted demerit points, the drunk driving rate dropped in the province. So that's my comment to this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor West has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to thank the members from Burlington, Perth—Wellington, Kitchener—Waterloo and Scarborough—Rouge River for their comments. I did have to write them all down so I'd remember. I'm still learning who everybody is.

I think it's important to note, not just specifically to my riding but all ridings—and being in Toronto you see cyclists frequently—that education, as the member from Kitchener—Waterloo pointed out, is key. I think that there are many items in place in the bill that will act as deterrents for distracted drivers and for cyclists who don't have proper lighting and such on their bikes. But the key is education. We can't expect people to follow laws that they don't know are in place.

I also think that, because cycling has become such a big part in my riding, we have to make sure that the fines that are in place are fair. Often people who are riding bicycles are doing so not only to be healthier, but because they simply can't afford to own a vehicle. So to have such expensive penalties for something such as not having a light on their bike I think would be a deterrent for some and a financial hardship. I think we need to look at those penalties and make sure that they're fair penalties.

The member from Burlington mentioned how we've had an amalgamation of ideas, and I think that's very important. It's not just about the government side, the members on the other side, but there are members from this side of the House too who are representing the people in our ridings, and I think it's important that the government side listen to what we have to say on behalf of the people in our ridings.

Lately, we've not seen that consultation process, and I'm hoping that we will begin to see a change such as we've had in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on Bill 31, Making Ontario's

Roads Safer. I'm very excited to talk about this bill, to speak on this bill. It's something that I've been wanting to do for some time, and I'm glad that I've got the opportunity tonight to do so.

The issue around road safety, the issue around safety for our pedestrians, for our bicyclists, is an extremely relevant and important issue for my community of Ottawa Centre. As members have heard me speak about often, I have the great privilege of representing downtown Ottawa, a community which is at the heart of the city of Ottawa, with some of the most incredible landmarks in our nation's capital located in my great community of Ottawa Centre.

But one of the incredible things about living in a downtown community, Speaker, as you can recognize, is that the members of my community very much rely on various forms of transportation, be it walking to work or to the local community centre; or taking a bicycle to various activities, to the farmer's market at Parkdale; or taking the bus to the newly developed Lansdowne Park in the Glebe; or living in Old Ottawa South and, in the middle of winter, skating downtown to work on the Rideau Canal. I mean, you name it, all different kinds of transportation are used in my riding by my constituents.

The next most exciting thing that's happening in my community of Ottawa Centre is the building of the Confederation Line, the light rail transit system, which basically starts in my community at Tunney's Pasture and goes all the way through downtown—actually underground through the downtown and then to the Rideau Centre, the University of Ottawa and beyond. So we are getting this incredible new addition of another way of great public transit by way of light rail that is going to make it even easier for my constituents, members of my community, to be able to travel from their home to their work, to the local farmer's market or one of our community rinks or local parks. Needless to say, for all those reasons, Speaker, there is a great sense of interest in my community in making sure that our roads are safe, that it is easy for members of my community to be able to walk, skate, ride their bike or take public transit to various things in our community.

I'm very proud to come from Ottawa because there are a lot of great things happening in my community to make it even more of a bicycle-friendly, pedestrian-friendly city. I'll give you a couple of examples that are happening right in my community of Ottawa Centre. First, there is, for the very first time, right in the downtown core, on Laurier Avenue, a segregated bike lane. It started two years ago as a pilot project. It has now been made permanent because of the incredible amount of use that came about. That has allowed for people to be able to travel through our downtown on Laurier Avenue.

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Those who know Ottawa well will know that Laurier Avenue is in the heart of downtown; it's a very busy road. Having two segregated bike lanes on both sides of the road makes it that much easier for people to get to work from their home. The Laurier Avenue Segregated

Bike Lane Project has been so successful that it won the 2015 Sustainable Community Award from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. It has been celebrated as a best practice and is being encouraged in other communities as well.

Another great thing that is happening in my community is the building of complete streets. Complete Streets for Canada is an incredible concept where cars, bicyclists and pedestrians are all treated equally. Lanes are created for all three modes of transportation in a way that people feel safe and have equal access to get from point A to point B. The very first complete street to be built in Ottawa is actually in my riding of Ottawa Centre, where Churchill Avenue in Westboro is now a complete street. There are two more planned in Ottawa, and they also happen to be in my community of Ottawa Centre: one on Main Street, starting construction in the spring, and the other will be on Scott Street, a couple of years from now—once again, really making sure that we're putting emphasis on all modes of transportation in my community, be it cars, bicyclists or pedestrians, by building more complete streets.

The result of all this great activity—and there are many other great things that are happening, with kilometres and kilometres of bike lanes, an easy-access foot bridge etc.—is that Ottawa is being recognized around Ontario and Canada as a leader and a bicycle-friendly community. I'm really happy to note that through Share the Road Cycling Coalition—and my good friend the member from Burlington, in her capacity as a CEO of Share the Road, was there two years ago and presented Ottawa the very first Gold Bicycle Friendly Community Award, yet again recognizing the fact that Ottawa has been doing incredible stuff in making sure it has safe streets. It's a usable city for bicyclists, for pedestrians and for skaters, and you name it.

That's why in my community—Speaker, you won't be surprised—we're really engaged in the development of Ontario's first bicycling strategy, #CycleON, which has resulted in so much behind the great things that we find in Bill 31. #CycleON was announced almost two years ago, laying out a very ambitious plan to make Ontario a cycle-friendly jurisdiction. Members of my community were quite engaged in that process.

I want to note three people, Speaker, who were part of the minister's advisory committee: Zlatko Krstulich, who works with the city of Ottawa, was quite engaged. He lives in my community, is a cycle enthusiast and has done a lot of good work in this area; Hans Moor, who is part of Citizens for Safe Cycling, another great advocacy group in my community, was part of that advisory group; City Councillor David Chernushenko, another great advocate of bicycling and pedestrian-safe streets.

They were very much part and parcel of the work that went into #CycleON, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all three of them for their advice to me as the member of provincial Parliament on how we can take concrete, practical steps within the provincial context to ensure that cities like Ottawa, which are putting so much

effort into making our communities safe for bicycles and pedestrians, can do more. A lot of their input and advice is reflected in #CycleON, the bicycling strategy that Ontario has put forward.

Speaker, as mentioned, Bill 31 has a lot of incredible stuff and, pulled together, it really takes a major, major step when it comes to making Ontario a leader in Canada—I would argue even in North America—toward making sure that our cities, our towns and our villages are welcoming to cyclists and pedestrians, with things like an emphasis on distracted driving, alcohol and drug-impaired driving, pedestrian and cyclist safety, and truck, vehicle and bus safety. All these things are very important components in making sure that our communities are safe for everyone and we are really fostering a culture of sharing between pedestrians, between cyclists and, of course, car drivers on our streets.

I would like to first focus on the part dealing with red-light cameras. You will notice that this bill has a section dealing with supporting municipalities. It proposes an improvement in municipalities' ability to charge and prosecute individuals from out of province who run red lights and fail to stop for school buses. This is a very important element in this bill, something that I had some hand in working on. I had the great opportunity of tabling Bill 131, a private member's bill, in October 2012, dealing with the enforcement of the Provincial Offences Act as it relates to red-light camera infractions from out-of-province drivers.

As you can imagine, in Ottawa, it being a border town just next to Quebec, this is a significant issue. We have red-light cameras on our streets. They are put in place to make our roads safer for other car drivers but also for pedestrians. We find ourselves in a strange situation where out-of-province drivers do not face the same rigour of law under the red-light camera regulations as do Ontario drivers. What my private member's bill, Bill 131, did was make sure that we created a level playing field and gave municipalities the power to be able to enforce the infractions on out-of-province plates.

I'm really happy to see that Bill 31 incorporates my private member's bill, something that I think represents a real challenge in my community. This will go a long way in making sure that roads are safer in the long run, in Ottawa and other communities where you have red-light cameras.

The second aspect I want to focus on in this bill, which is very important, is around pedestrian and cyclist safety, something that, as I mentioned earlier, is a very important issue for my community. There are some really interesting and important things that are part of this legislation that will promote cycling as active transportation and specifically improve cyclist safety. Too many times, we hear in my community that a person unfortunately loses his or her life because of a collision between a car or truck and a cyclist. Just a week and a half ago, we had another fatality—it happened to be in my community, in Ottawa Centre—where a person was hit by a garbage truck and succumbed to his injuries.

These are the things that we need to prevent and take every step possible. I think this particular bill will go a long way by ensuring that municipalities now will be allowed, if the bill passes, to create contraflow bicycle lanes to provide more direct routes and connectivity. It's a real challenge, especially in dense urban communities like Ottawa where you've have a lot of one-ways. This will allow for a real opportunity for municipalities to be able to use a one-way and put in contraflow bicycle lanes for cyclists to travel.

Increasing the range of convictions for dooring of cyclists is, I think, another very important move. Fines going from between \$60 and \$500 to between \$300 and \$1,000, and raising the demerit points from two to three, is a very significant step, again, to make sure that people are a little bit more cognizant when they are opening their doors on busy streets and check their blind spots so they are not hitting a bicyclist who may be coming.

The other important point that has been mentioned during the debate is the one-metre rule when passing cyclists where it is practicable—another very important step that will allow for more safe cycling and better understanding of sharing the road within our communities. This is an issue that I have heard about quite often in my community, and I'm really excited to see that it is part of this bill.

2030

In terms of pedestrian safety, requiring drivers to yield the whole roadway to pedestrians at school crossings and pedestrian crossovers is, again, a very important and significant step. In the grand scheme of things, when you think about it, it doesn't seem like a big thing. Why was it not done before? The fact of the matter is that the Highway Traffic Act was written in a particular way. It was written as legislation at a time where driving cars was the prevalent way of doing things, and now the reality is changing. More and more, in communities across the province, we see more people walking, more people being active in their lives. These changes are extremely important, so I'm really happy to see that we are changing the manner in which we take active transportation. Through these changes, we really are bringing a cultural shift, a cultural change, in ensuring that our roads are safe.

To that I would add that the provisions around distracted driving are very important, as well. There are ample studies now out that show that when you're on your phone while driving, on your BlackBerry or iPhone, and texting, the danger that you cause on the road in some instances is more than drinking and driving. This is a serious issue. I think that we know as much, that we are not allowed to use our hand-held devices while driving. We often see people doing it. Just this morning, as I was coming from the airport to Queen's Park, I saw about three drivers at stop signs, their eyes were gazing down. It is easy to spot when somebody is looking at their device, and not at the steering wheel, not at the road. It is dangerous. It jeopardizes your own life, but most importantly, it jeopardizes the lives around you, whether pedes-

trians or cyclists or other car drivers. To see that we are increasing the fines and we are introducing demerit points is a very important step that is very much part of this bill.

So add all these things together, Speaker—and I've just picked things that I think are very important from the perspective of my community in Ottawa—and you really start to see that this bill takes a very significant step in making our roads safer, I really want to thank everybody in this House who has contributed to this bill. I want to thank the Minister of Transportation, Steven Del Duca, for his leadership in bringing this very fulsome package together to the Legislature so that we can really get to see all these pieces together that will make our community safe.

In my last couple of minutes, I do want to talk about another important issue, which is not part of this legislation, but I think it's a discussion worth having. This is something that I heard in my community quite a lot, and that's around speed limits on residential streets. This is a very significant issue in my community. As I mentioned, it's a densely populated community with a lot of young families, and we're finding that 50 kilometres an hour as a default speed is just too much. We live in a time when we live in more tight-knit communities, there are more kids on the streets, the cars are much faster now than ever before, and perhaps—having had conversations with my constituents—it is time that we consider lowering the default speed limits from 50 kilometres an hour to 40 kilometres an hour on residential streets, and to 30 kilometres an hour around school zones.

Ample studies have been done that demonstrate that the impact on collision of a car driving at 50 kilometres an hour versus a car driving 40 kilometres an hour is drastically lower; in fact, the chances of a person surviving that kind of collision is much higher just by reducing the speed limit by 10 kilometres. In fact, even our coroner, who did quite an extensive study on pedestrian deaths—one of the recommendations he outlined was to reduce the default speed limit on residential streets from 50 kilometres an hour to 40 kilometres an hour. We're excited to see other jurisdictions around the world taking the same step. In fact, most recently, New York City reduced their speed limit to 30 kilometres an hour on residential streets, and Paris has done the same. I introduce that as a topic for debate and discussion.

In the long run, I think there still needs to be more analysis done in the context of Ontario. No doubt, we still need to do some consultation to hear from our municipal partners, from other community groups and those who advocate on behalf of drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians, to see if that is something Ontario needs to consider.

But, Speaker, I can tell you, listening to my constituents in Ottawa Centre as I go knocking on doors in my community every weekend, this is an issue that I hear quite often about. There will be a tremendous amount of support in my community if we as the Legislature consider reducing default speed limits on our residential

streets from 50 kilometres to 40 kilometres an hour and in our school zones to 30 kilometres an hour because it will really complement well some of the changes that are outlined here.

Thank you, Speaker, for the time, and I hope all members will support Bill 31.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is now time for questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do wish to respond to the presentation by the Minister of Community Safety. As we all in this Legislature have stressed with Bill 31, and as the minister indicated, it's all about making our roads safe.

I will say that, down our way, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation are doing their best. They have been trying to replace a bridge in Cayuga; it was built in 1924. This is a bridge that now is subject to US Steel coil trucks—a tremendous weight. I know that because I've stood out on the bridge when this happens.

However, once again, Six Nations activists have taken over the bridge. This has happened several times now. Construction workers essentially determine that discretion is better than valour, and leave. We have a bridge that was built in 1924. The Ontario Ministry of Transportation has reached out to the confederacy; these are the activists. The most recent incursion on this bridge was just Friday. Men's Fire and the confederacy—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What does this have to do with the bill?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'm talking about safety, and I'm talking about transportation.

I can give you another quote from the Minister of Community Safety. Maybe we need him down there rather than the Ministry of Transportation. They're being hung out to dry.

The minister just indicated that we all want to feel safe. The title of this bill has the word "safety." We cannot have construction workers finish a bridge that needs to be replaced—going back to 1924. Because of political correctness on this side of the House, nobody is doing anything to deal with this illegal activity out on this bridge. Things have been going on for eight and a half years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to speak to the government House leader, who is also the Minister of Community Safety and the member from Ottawa Centre. I will have my turn shortly to fully debate this bill, but I just want to add a couple of pieces since I've been sitting here listening to the debate.

We've heard a lot from the other side about this bill being about lots of folks coming together and having their say. Then, on this side of the House, we don't exactly see that other than that, in this bill, we do have things that were from previous members Jonah Schein and Rosario Marchese and our current member from Parkdale—High Park.

They have put input into this bill, but at that time the members on the opposite side said that it wasn't some-

thing that could be done; they weren't ready to do it. They said our policy hadn't been thought through. Now here they are, putting it together in another omnibus bill that I'm sure we're going to see time-allocated.

2040

It's interesting and ironic that they're going to bring us in here on a night sitting to time-allocate another bill. I mean, if I had to sit here on a night sitting, I wish I was talking about the child care bill; I wish I was talking about accountability and transparency. But instead, Speaker, we've been time-allocated on all of those bills. People across this province have had no say about really important bills. And here we are, on transportation, which I think is an important bill—don't get me wrong—but a night sitting, Speaker? I'm not quite so sure.

I'm really going to enjoy my 20-minute piece later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Questions and comments? The member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you Mr. Speaker. What an honour to have you in the chair for the first time as I have a chance to represent—congratulations.

I, too, am delighted to speak to Bill 31, Making Ontario's Roads Safer. The minister from Ottawa-Carleton—sorry, Ottawa Centre; my apologies—represents my daughter, Dara, who is at Carleton University—hence the confusion there—who tells me repeatedly what a great job you're doing in that community. She and her boyfriend, who live there, are very, very supportive.

I think it's really appropriate that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services should be addressing this bill. All these new measures we're putting into place to make the roads safer—distracted drivers, drinking and driving, new fines and such—let's be clear: As the Minister of Community Safety—you'd better look out and you'd better watch out; you'd better do what you're told in this particular bill, because—

Mr. Steve Clark: You'd better not pout, you'd better not cry.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Exactly. Thank you for picking up on that. You'd better not cry, because if you don't pick up on the measures here and you get pulled over, you're once again going to be under his purview in the correctional services system, and then you will be crying, and then you will be naughty or nice. Thank you.

I'm just saying, if people don't do what the bill says, they will be under your direction as the Minister of Correctional Services. I know they'll be well looked after in the system. However—

Mr. Steve Clark: So be good, for goodness' sake.

Mr. Arthur Potts: For goodness' sake, be good.

There are some very important measures here, and we've had such impassioned words today from the member from Burlington about bike safety. For no other reason than that, that section of the act is so very important.

I know we've heard from many members on both sides of the House. There seems to be widespread support. I think we're going to move very quickly. We may not need to time-allocate this bill because you'll be

so supportive that we could have unanimous consent before this debate is over.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to provide a couple of moments of questions and comments on the government House leader's speech on Bill 31. I'm not going to talk about time allocation. I think I've been very clear on my position on time allocation. But I do want to make a few comments on the minister's response regarding cycling. I know he mentioned his riding, Ottawa Centre, and his passion for cycling.

I remember a few years ago—and the member for Burlington was involved in the Share the Road coalition—that I got the opportunity to speak on a panel with the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, from the New Democrats, the Minister of Labour, the member for Oakville and also the head the Green Party. We had a great co-operative discussion about cycling and about what needs to happen in the province when it comes to cycling legislation.

I'm glad that this bill actually incorporates some of the components from my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka's bill. I'm glad that it includes that. Also, on the towing side, I'm glad that the member for Simcoe North's provisions are included.

I wanted to let the House know of a great project in my riding. The member for Kingston and the Islands is sitting beside the government House leader, and she knows all about it. I'm so pleased this year that the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and the St. Lawrence Parks Commission were able to finish the trail, the parkway bike path. It is a 27-year project that has just gotten resurfaced. I'm so glad. If anybody is anywhere near Leeds-Grenville, the Thousand Islands Parkway is this very picturesque, 37-kilometre trail that helps our community with cycling and with active living.

We all know the importance of cycling in our communities. I have to say that this wonderful collaborative effort between the municipalities and the parks commission is well used. It's good public policy, and I'm glad it promotes cycling, not just in my riding but all around the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for a response.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton Mountain, Beaches—East York and Leeds-Grenville for their very constructive feedback to my comments earlier on.

I've got to share an observation that I noticed. There is a tremendous amount of excitement in this Legislature when it comes to Bill 31. I think a lot of people see their input, their fingerprints, in this bill from all three parties.

We've come a long way. When anybody who stands up in this House brags about all the great things that are happening in their community when it comes to making it more accessible for cyclists and for pedestrians and making sure that the community is a healthy community,

a community that welcomes people using active modes of transportation, that's an amazing place to be at. I think it speaks volumes for our province in terms of the direction we're going in in making sure that not only do we create the right set of conditions for active transportation but also that we make Ontario the nexus in Canada for bicycling-related tourism, which is a huge source of revenue around the world. We could be at the forefront of that.

Bill 31 will really help us get to that milestone, will really move us in that direction. And with all the positive feedback that is being shared in this Legislature, I'm confident that the debate on this bill and the subsequent consideration at the committee and back at third reading is going to be a very useful process to ensure that we're listening to our communities, that this bill is a strong bill and will make sure that we truly are making roads in Ontario safer.

I thank all the members for their comments and look forward to the passage of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker: I want to correct my record.

In my enthusiasm about the \$2-million project along the Thousand Islands Parkway, I omitted the name of the project. It is the Thousand Islands Recreational Trail. I wanted to correct my record and make sure I got the correct name of the project on the public record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is now time for further debate.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act.

Our critic, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, I think, did a good job of going into all aspects of the bill. It does cover many different areas, so I won't try to cover everything.

It is a highway safety bill, so I want to talk, probably for most of my time, about the issue of the greatest importance in my riding right now to do with highway safety, and that is certainly winter road maintenance. That's an issue that I'm receiving daily emails on. All last year—and last year was quite a winter, with lots of snow and ice and cold temperatures. But already this year, we've had some significant snow events. I've received many, many emails, all very unique, concerned with road conditions. I've certainly experienced it myself as well.

It's just in the last, I think, three years since the government changed the contract. I'll provide my advice on how I think they could improve things after I get some of the concerns of my constituents on the record.

Certainly, Highway 11 has been closed north of Huntsville and south of Gravenhurst a few times. On a Thursday night driving down here, I had to divert across country when I saw the tail lights all backed up. I learned

after the fact that the transport trucks were stuck on Highway 11 south. It wasn't that there was an accident; they actually just couldn't get moving. Coming back a couple weeks after that, again on a Thursday, Highway 11 southbound was closed at about the same spot. In that case, I could see that there were transports across the highway. I can tell you, it was pretty slippery, and there didn't seem to be any sign of sand or salt on the highway.

Over on the Parry Sound side of the riding, we've had numerous closures of Highway 400 and, really, across the whole region. We heard, I think, the member from Nickel Belt getting on the record, talking about how generally across northern Ontario the last few years have just not been satisfactory.

2050

I have a long letter from the operator of a bus service in Parry Sound district. It's a good letter. I want to get it on the record, so I shall read that letter. It's from Barry Bell, who's president of Bell Transportation operating out of Dunchurch, which is northeast of Parry Sound on Highway 124. He writes:

"Mr. Miller,

"I am asking for your help because apparently Premier Wynne has hired a bunch of inspectors to keep an eye on the contractors charged with maintaining the safety of our province's highways and byways during these winter months.

"I need someone to have Premier Wynne direct some investigation into the Parry Sound–Almaguin area, specifically the Highway 124 corridor.

"Mr. Miller, I have eight school buses that have to navigate various sections of this highway. However, there are other school bus companies that are also servicing various sections of this roadway as well.

"This morning, November 11, 2014—there was no precipitation falling. The temperature in Dunchurch was a shade under zero degrees Celsius. However, there had been a wet snowfall yesterday evening that had been plowed off by our local contractor (Carillion) but the highway remained very wet.

"At some point last night the servicing stopped but the moisture on the road froze and by morning there was a dangerous sheen of ice coating large portions of the road.

"I could hear McDougall township's road crews commenting on the ridiculous condition of Highway 124 on the radio scanner, as they were out making sure their township roads were safe.

"My drivers began to filter into work, all with stories about how slippery the highway was. Each more incredulous than the next as to why the road wasn't being serviced.

"As they began their routes, they began providing updates on two-way radio and advising caution about the frozen surface on specific sections of the road, how some were sliding through bus stops, and asking if there were any Carillion sightings.

"Mr. Miller, I had attempted to contact the local contractor's yard in Dunchurch, but there was no answer. I called the Carillion office in Emsdale—no answer. I

finally got in touch with a Carillion patrolman for Parry Sound who agreed with me about the state of the highway as he had noticed the severity of the slickness and had called the patrolman who was supposed to be monitoring this area, and was assured that someone would be called in right away.

"This was all happening between 7:30-8 a.m. The patrolman should have had a salter/sander on the road long before. Certainly the issue should have been addressed before the school buses hit the road.

"I don't ask for preferential treatment because of my buses, but I expect it, Mr. Miller. Everybody says we transport the world's most precious cargo, and I happen to wholeheartedly agree. If a busload of children is involved in a catastrophic accident, the reverberations of that would extend far beyond just the children on board and the driver. It would impact everyone, because in small communities like mine, every child on our buses is someone's niece or nephew or grandchild or friend or neighbour. We are all connected by very small numbers of separation. It is one thing to keep the roads safe for people to commute to work, but shouldn't ensuring safe passage for our area's children to school warrant more dedicated service than we receive?

"I was on pins and needles this morning, Mr. Miller, because if the buses were sliding, it would only stand to reason that the other motorists would be doing the same. So, although this morning did pass without serious incident, left unchecked it is only a matter of time before a car or truck or tractor-trailer will slide into the back of a school bus. Or, worse still, slide through the flashing red lights and put the lives of children crossing the road in peril.

"Will a serious accident have to occur before Premier Wynne does something more than hire some investigating inspectors? Will a child have to die on the side of the road in a pile of frozen slush before Carillion and their ilk realize they should be doing a better job?

"When weather and road conditions dictate, the Transportation Consortium in North Bay cancel bus service. That determination is made on a day-to-day, in-the-moment, basis. We had 13 such cancellations last year. That was almost 10% of the school year. I know there will be days when we will not be able to send the buses and that will not be Carillion's fault. But those determinations should always be because of a reaction to the tableau Mother Nature has presented—not because someone hasn't done their job properly.

"In retrospect I could have and perhaps should have contacted the consortium and recommended shutting down service this morning. But when the sky is clear and the temperature trend set to warm up significantly and with the misguided faith that a salter would be imminently dispatched, I chose to trust that someone would be addressing the road conditions expeditiously. But that did not occur. Oh, the sky remained clear and the thermometer did rise as the forecast remained true, but Carillion was nowhere to be found.

"A Carillion truck was finally spotted salting the Highway 124 after 8:30 a.m. That is completely unacceptable

and I would contend a dereliction of duty on someone's part. (Having said this, my abhorrence for the lack of attention afforded Highway 520 to Ardbeg, a purported class 5 road, that three of my school buses have to traverse, typically gets an appalling lack of service based on this categorization, and puts lives at risk constantly, has been documented and reported to the MTO and Carillion. Highway 520 was also grossly underserviced today, but that is a completely different situation according to the maintenance standard.)

"An even more troubling question haunts me because such obvious gross incompetence seems hard to imagine. A slippery road is a pretty black and white problem. Are the patrolmen being ruled by some ridiculous notion that comes from their superiors to save money and cut back on services to do so? Perhaps our local patrolman was just asleep at the wheel (perhaps literally), or maybe he is an inexperienced new hire or maybe he is just really bad at his job. But we have historically received less than stellar service from this organization, and presumably so have others, as evidenced by Premier Wynne's directive. The question I ask is, 'Why?' The shoddy maintenance seems to be a given, and the doling out of fines for such almost a cost of doing business, but 'why' is this so? Perhaps there is a nexus at play that should be part of an investigation as well, no? How much money does it cost to salt/sand Highway 124? Therefore that cost is being directly saved when it isn't done when it should have been. Does this concern anyone other than myself?

"I honestly do not feel this letter is overreactionary or exaggerated. As I previously mentioned, my claim was substantiated by another patrolman. But we are only into November with a long road of winter ahead. That idea alone inspires not much more than depression and anxiety, but those emotions are compounded by having to experience the daily crapshoot as to whether Carillion has adequately held up their end of the bargain or not.

"Mr. Miller, if you could be so kind as to help me do something about this predicament before it becomes something none of us want to contemplate let alone live through—that being the unwarranted and unjustifiable and completely preventable sustained injury or death of a child, I would be in your debt and very much appreciative.

"Thank you for your consideration in this matter."

That was Barry Bell, president of Bell Transportation.

Mr. Speaker, I have countless other emails, all unique situations, all talking about various and sundry different highways around Parry Sound-Muskoka, but I think that one letter gives a pretty good indication, and I don't want to use all my time speaking about that issue.

However, on that issue, my recommendation to the government is, go back to the old system that you had, that worked. I was a member here for 10 years when we still had private contractors, but MTO had the experience in-house. They had patrollers who drove the roads and they had supervisors who simply directed the private contractor when to sand and when to salt. The system worked. There was no incentive for the contractor to not

put salt on or to put salt on. As far as I understand, they didn't pay for the salt and sand. Now, the contractor is totally responsible for the contract, including determining when sand and salt goes on, and for the cost of it; so there is actually an incentive. If you want to save money and make more money, you put less sand and salt on. Well, the system in the last two years has not worked.

With the old system, I hardly had a complaint in 10 years. I think all the rural and northern representatives in this place would tell you that they're getting hundreds of complaints now, and if they drive the roads at all, they'll realize that it is a real situation with safety at risk, as demonstrated by the letter that I have received.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go on, and I guess I'll talk next a bit about the cycling part of this, seeing as I'm pleased that as part of Bill 31, an aspect of the private member's bill that I debated a few times in this Legislature, which was advocating for paved shoulders on designated provincial highways, has been taken into the bill, and that is actually making it legal to cycle on paved shoulders.

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I think we have seen a change in the last number of years. I remember a few years back—I think Jim Bradley was the Minister of Transportation—I would write on behalf of constituents who would be requesting that the shoulder be paved on their secondary highway as the road work was being done. I would get, more or less, a form letter back from the government saying why they couldn't possibly pave the shoulder and how it didn't make any sense. I'm glad to say that eventually that has changed and we have seen some highways paved.

I think the benefits of that are safety for cyclists and pedestrians, and for automobile and truck drivers; the obvious health benefits, if people have more safe places to cycle; tourism opportunities, especially in a riding like mine, Parry Sound–Muskoka; and, of course, reduced maintenance costs.

Recently, I met with the Parry Sound active transportation committee, and the member from Burlington sat in on that meeting. We have a very active committee that has great plans to try to connect some of the areas that aren't connected right now. I know there are plans for a cycling route around Georgian Bay. They'd love to see Highway 559 connected to Killbear Provincial Park, which is one of the most popular parks in the province. It's about 30 kilometres from Parry Sound, which is a nice cycling distance. There are probably, I'm guessing, 5,000 people at Killbear Provincial Park through the summertime. It's obviously a very cyclable distance into Parry Sound, if it's safe, and it's not safe on Highway 559 at this time.

The municipality of Carling would like to see some short routes to connect to the busy places, and in the long-term they'd like to see a paved shoulder, at the minimum, on Highway 559.

Highway 124, which connects Parry Sound to Sundridge—a good portion of it does have a paved shoulder. As it's been getting rebuilt, they have been paving the

shoulder; and, of course, the committee would like to see the gaps filled in when an opportunity presents itself. As well as in the town of Parry Sound and McDougall, where Nobel, which has some great paved shoulders, connects it right into downtown Parry Sound, they would like to see that with paved shoulders, and a trail as well in that short section that connects to the town.

Michael Gordon and Sue Woodhouse and Aleesha Mullen are all members of that committee, working hard to provide more safe cycling opportunities in the Parry Sound area. We have similar committees around Muskoka as well, and I know the district of Muskoka has, on some of the recent jobs, paved shoulders going into Gravenhurst. I know High Falls Road was also, when it was rebuilt, done in a cycling-friendly fashion.

I did want to speak a bit about another private member's bill that I have coming up, and that is one to do with UTVs. There's some reference in Bill 31 to low-pressure tires; maybe somebody from the government can explain what is supposed to be accomplished by that, because I'm not positive. My private member's bill would sort of catch up with the times and allow utility task vehicles to be driven where ATVs are currently allowed to be driven.

I think anybody from, again, rural or northern Ontario, especially as you get further afield, would realize that there are many types of devices that hunters and some seniors and other folks are using that they use in the same manner as an all-terrain vehicle. But right now, the definition of an ATV is very limited. It's one person, four wheels, a vehicle that you straddle. My private member's bill would allow UTVs, and they're brands like Polaris Ranger, as an example, which has a bench seat that two or three people could sit on. They have specific ATVs that are designed for two people, two-ups, that are very popular. My private member's bill would allow those vehicles to be driven where ATVs currently are designated on some provincial highways and where municipalities allow them.

I look forward to February 26 and having the opportunity to debate that private member's bill. I know that there are some members on all sides of the House who have said they support it, so I'm looking forward to that.

I did want to talk a bit about pedestrians, because there's a reference in this bill to pedestrians. Having spent a wee bit of time in London, England, I think we could learn a lot from the way London handles everything, really. They have far more traffic and bicycles and pedestrians than we do in Toronto, for example—in fact, when you come back, it seems kind of quiet here in Toronto—but they do a way better job of managing that.

For example, pedestrian crosswalks are not in the intersection; they're a bit up from the intersection. Generally speaking, you just cross onto an island and there's a relatively short time frame to cross. But instead of the intersection being filled with pedestrians and cars trying to drive through them, which is a very dangerous situation, the intersections are more or less free and the traffic—bicycles, cars, buses and taxis—is all moving pretty

quickly through them. I would suggest that our province could learn—and the city of Toronto, certainly, if Mr. Tory is looking for ideas—and spend some time in London and learn from that.

I heard the member from Kitchener–Conestoga saying that we needed traffic circle rules. We could probably learn from Europe there too. He was talking about how pedestrians are involved with traffic circles. I spent a week in Ireland and I don't remember any pedestrians being at traffic circles but I'm sure they have it figured out. Maybe it is that the pedestrians don't cross right at the circle but up the street a little bit from the—

Interjections.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd volunteer to go to Ireland to study this if it needs to be studied.

Interjections.

Mr. Norm Miller: I can see I've got all-party—a bunch of people wanting to go with me to study this situation.

I'm running out of time, but I did want to just briefly commend the member from Simcoe North on his move for the tow truck aspect of this bill that has been adopted. Of course, as well, the NDP member from—

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: —Parkdale–High Park, who had a private member's bill to do with the one-metre rule for cyclists that is also part of this.

I'm not going to have a chance to talk about it, but an important part of the bill, I think, is the distracted driving part. I do think that distracted driving is kind of the new drunk driving, especially when our young people and some of the people in this building are addicted to looking at their devices every time they buzz, which is about every 30 seconds around this place. The temptation, when you're driving along and it buzzes, to look at it or to try to respond, is strong, so I certainly worry. That's probably the thing I worry about—other than winter road maintenance—a lot on our roads. I think it's something that needs to be dealt with. I know in places like Australia they've run pilot programs to incentivize people to use hands-free devices, and I think that might be a good approach versus just having huge penalties like we're seeing in the current bill.

Mr. Speaker, I can see I'm out of time, so I shall sit down. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. But first, my daughter just texted me; I just want to say good night, Claire. It's late. It's time to go to bed. Have a good day tomorrow. I love you.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka actually touched on two major issues that I'm just so heartened to hear from him. Hopefully it's reflective of the entire PC caucus. He commented on the road maintenance in the north. He said that a long time ago MTO had the full purview of that safety and that maintenance. He said they had the experience to maintain those roads. They had the

system in place. It was a public service. They were tasked with keeping those roads clear, because it was a direct public safety issue.

I have to say, when he commented that there's an incentive now to not put the sand and the salt down on the road, this is a very powerful statement. It's actually reflective of the experience that he has had in this House over these many years: When profit drives the safety agenda, profit wins and safety loses.

Actually, that is the experience that we are seeing in the north of Ontario. Because, you know what? Those northerners don't have Matt Galloway on CBC, who actually gets on the radio and the callers call in. They don't have that balance, the demographic, the power of the people up in the north, because it's so disparate, if you will. When things go wrong on the QEW, on the Gardiner or on the 427, people call up the local media and they get the attention of the government pretty fast.

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So I just want to thank the member for raising that issue. I think that those concerns are felt by northern members across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I just wanted to take a couple of minutes to respond to comments from members opposite, and just to highlight—for me, anyway, and I know for a number of residents of Newmarket–Aurora—some of the more salient and interesting and important points that Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act, 2014, highlights.

I know that, for the past 13 years, Ontario has been ranked either first or second in North America for road safety. But we know as well that there is always more that we can do to improve our road safety.

Some of the things that shocked me in terms of why we need some improvement: Recent statistics talk about that over 45% of drivers killed in Ontario were found to have drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol in their system. Drinking and driving fatalities represented nearly one quarter of all fatalities in 2011. From 2008 to 2012, an average of 14% of convicted alcohol-impaired drivers were repeat offenders. If current collision trends continue, fatalities from distracted driving may exceed those from drinking and driving by 2016. In 2011, pedestrians constituted approximately one in five motor vehicle-related fatalities.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much more that we need to do. One last point I wanted to make—because I have been talking to tow truck drivers and they're delighted to hear about the “slow down, move over” law being extended to tow trucks that are stopped on the roadsides with their amber lights flashing. On the 400-series highways, we're looking at \$600,000 an hour when an accident shuts down the roads, and tow truck drivers are often the first people there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure again to provide a couple of minutes of questions and comments, this time

to my colleague the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. First of all, he did mention his private member's bill, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to utility task and all-terrain vehicles. I told him this when he introduced it for first reading: I think this is a great bill. I'm pleased to—if he'll let me; I made a private plea to him and now I'm going to make a public plea: I'd really like to be able to speak to your bill that day. I think I've given lots of praise tonight, so he better let me speak.

I do want to make a few comments because I did table a motion at public accounts about highway maintenance, and I know that the Auditor General is doing her due diligence on that. I know that the committee allowed her to do a report, and I believe it's not going to come out until next year. I'm a bit disappointed that we couldn't have had it leading up to this year.

One of the frustrating things as an MPP is when you ask a very simple question and you don't get a simple answer. I filed two order paper questions—you know, Speaker, if we're not satisfied with the answer to a question in question period, we can ask for a late show. We can ask for a special debate.

I would love the standing orders—and I know the Clerk is raising her eyebrows already—I'd love to change the standing orders so that if we're not happy with an order paper question response, we're actually eligible to have a special debate for a late show, because I had two very easy order paper questions for the ministry, and they blew both of them. One of them was a simple one asking about the practice of installing a snow fence along Highway 401; and the second one was, basically, why did MTO accept a Kingston East winter maintenance contract that reduced the pieces on the road to 34 from the 52 pieces of equipment that were required in the previous contract? Simple questions; no answers from the Ministry of Transportation. I'm sick of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, it's 15 minutes after 9 o'clock, and there's something that we've all been speaking about on this bill. We're focusing on distracted driving. But let's not be distracted from this bill. There's all kinds of little pieces in here.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Sometimes I do my best work at night.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Don't encourage night sittings.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Don't misconstrue that.

Anyways, here's what I want to point out with regard to—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: You found that kind of funny. The Speaker found it funny, too. I think it's called—you know, how you get when working overtime. We all know what that feels like.

This particular piece, I don't want us to be distracted from. It's very interesting here. This bill actually weakens the notification provided to align the Highway

407 East Act with the 407 ETR plate denial process. It's a very interesting piece in this bill. What it's doing is, it's actually removing the requirement—and maybe some of the Liberal caucus members didn't know, because I see some of them perking up. They're perking up at 9:16, now. What you're going to find, and this could happen to you: If you are on the 407—what's going to happen is that this company does not need to notify you by registered mail 30 days prior to your plate not being renewed. So you're going to find yourself in a bit of a pickle. You're going to end up with no plate renewal if you weren't aware of that. You go to the MTO and you can't get your plate. Then you're driving around with a plate that's expired, and guess what can happen? You get another ticket.

This government really is not doing anybody any favours by not requiring corporations or companies to meet their obligations legally to people when their actual legal reason why you have to have a plate—you can actually cause more expense to someone when they don't have that plate renewal. So that's not a good thing in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Newmarket–Aurora, Leeds–Grenville and London–Fanshawe for their comments.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo talked about the MTO-directed system for roads.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora was talking about drug-impaired driving, and I think that's one where we need some testing. I know, having spoken to my spouse, who's an OPP officer, she has mentioned how difficult it is to deal with a drug-impaired driver, even if you suspect there's something wrong. So I suspect the government has got some work to do there.

The member from Perth–Wellington hasn't had an opportunity to speak to this bill, but he represents a rural area, and he brought up the section of the chrome yellow school buses and that they'll have to have all the markings of a school bus. He said that in his area, hog farmers use old school buses to—what do they do with them, member from Perth–Wellington?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: They haul hogs.

Mr. Norm Miller: They haul hogs in old school buses. So he's wondering if this new law is going to somehow adversely affect the hog haulers in his area. That's something to consider.

I know the member from London–Fanshawe was talking earlier about the great increase in fines for distracted driving. I certainly agree that distracted driving is the new drunk driving. It's something we do need to be concerned about. I'm not sure a huge increase in fines is the complete answer. I think education and programs to incentivize people to use hands-free devices is maybe a better approach than simply increasing the fines, which, as she pointed out, go from now a low of \$300 up to \$1,000.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I think I'm obligated to call for further debate. The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you for being obligated, because I would hate to miss out on my opportunity. I know, Speaker, that if I don't get up and stand right now and speak to this, it could be time-allocated and I'll totally miss the boat.

This is a very comprehensive bill, as we've definitely heard. It has a number of issues that have been of long-standing concern to many people in this House. It does offer definitely some great solutions that I'm happy to support, but it's not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. I hope that we can see some changes made in amendments when it goes to committee.

The bill revisits the issues brought forward in the previous Parliament in Bill 34, the Highway Traffic Statute Law Amendment Act, in relation to the collection of fines by municipalities, and also Bill 173, an amendment to the same act in relation to keeping Ontario roads safe.

It also introduces some new measures to address drugged driving, as well as some changes to the Highway 407 East Act.

2120

Our roads are a dangerous place. As I drive along the QEW to go between here and my riding, I see way too—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don't know if it's bothering the member for Hamilton Mountain or not, but I would ask the government members to please come to order so that I can hear the member for Hamilton Mountain.

The member for Hamilton Mountain has the floor.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I'm used to them not paying attention to anything I have to say in this House. It happens often.

As I'm driving between my riding and here, there are many times where I see accidents on the road. Usually, we're sitting in the back of traffic.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Like today.

Miss Monique Taylor: We actually experienced just that this morning. The member from Welland and myself were driving in, and coming on an off-ramp, there was a tractor-trailer that quite possibly was either distracted driving or something. God bless, but it didn't look good. He was completely over a hill and the front cab was just smashed.

That's something that we see often in this travel, and a lot of times that possibly is from distracted driving. It's a major issue. I'm glad that it's being addressed in this bill, because a lot of times it could be very inconvenient to folks—you know, we're in a meeting and we're late, and it's a dented vehicle, probably. Then we have to deal with our insurance, and we all know in this House what that can be like. It definitely puts us at risk of our insurance premiums being increased, or anything, you know. But it could also be worse. It could be at the expense of

somebody's life because somebody's not paying attention.

A couple of weeks ago, I met with Ron Summers and Stan Double, who are representatives from my Hamilton firefighters. I know that, across this House, we all had those meetings. We were talking about a very important issue, and it was post-traumatic stress disorder. It's something that they face. We may have to be stuck in traffic, and we can drive by that accident, but those first responders have to live with what they're seeing on that road. We know that we have to support them in that PTSD, to make sure, when they are responding to accidents on our roads, that we're also taking care of them at the same time.

I'm just trying to filter through here, Speaker, because I definitely won't have enough time to go through everything that I have prepared in this House. Right in this House, we see that members in this House are going through distracted debate. We know how important it is that many of us are picking up our BlackBerry and we're looking at our BlackBerry, because of the urgency that we see. We know that people want an instantaneous response from us, and it has become a way of life for many folks.

The same thing is happening in vehicles. How many times are you driving down the road and you're seeing the guy next to you talking on his BlackBerry, talking on the phone, sending text messages? It's a serious problem, so we need to make sure that we take care of that, and that we just pay attention to what's happening in our lives and, I think, maybe get back to some basics.

We know that getting messages across the House—once upon a time here, it had to be a pretty important message for a page to be bringing you that note and making sure that you got it. But, like I said today, it's all at the tap of our fingers, and it happens really quickly.

Let's take a look at some statistics from CAA:

—drivers engaged in text messaging and on a cell-phone are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash or a near-crash event, compared with non-distracted drivers;

—80% of collisions and 65% of near-crashes have some form of driver inattention as a contributing factor;

—distracted drivers are three times more likely to be in a crash than attentive drivers; and

—international research shows that 20% to 30% of all collisions involve a distracted driver.

In March of this year, the OPP reported that distracted driving was the number one killer on our roads. On roads patrolled by the OPP, there were 78 people killed as a result of distracted driving-related crashes in 2013.

I did hear in some debate earlier that we need to be educating our young people about how important this is. There's one clip that I have seen on YouTube of young girls. They're driving in the car and they're all chatting. Then, all of a sudden, the driver gets a text, and the car crashes and everybody in the car dies except the driver—and what that person had to live with.

It was just a short clip on YouTube, but how many students, how many children, how many young people

who are getting their licence are watching these kinds of videos to make sure that they're paying attention and that they know the serious risks that they're doing not to just themselves but either to their friends or their neighbour or just a stranger in the next car?

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Lots to talk about here, folks. Lots to talk about.

This bill increases the fines for distracted drivers to a maximum of \$1,000.

We were talking earlier about bikes and having proper lighting on bikes. The numbers kind of threw me off there, because—let me see here. A fine could be up to \$500 for not having a proper light on your bicycle, yet it's a minimum fine of \$300 for distracted driving. There is something wrong there, Speaker. There's something wrong when not having a light on your bicycle is not as high an offence as driving distracted. I think there's a problem with that.

I think there's a good framework there. It is a very important issue. This is a very important issue. I'm happy to see that demerit points can be attached to this too. But, again, there needs to be a little bit more that goes on with that.

Tinted windows, Speaker: This is something that, just by chance, I happened to send a letter to the Minister of Transportation on the same day that he tabled this bill. It was brought to me by a constituent saying that some people have very dark tinted windows, and you're not able to see if they are distracted driving: if they're on their cellphone, if they're texting, what they're doing. You can't see them.

Ms. Cindy Forster: They're doing their hair, their makeup.

Miss Monique Taylor: They're doing all kinds of things: mascara—and I'm the mascara queen, Speaker. Let me tell you, there is no possible way I could drive and put mascara on. Yet you see people actually doing this on the road. It's unbelievable.

If an officer believes a particular tinted window obstructs a driver's view or obscures the view into a vehicle, they can write a ticket for the offence.

I'm hoping that the minister would consider this as part of this bill. I think it's something that really needs to be looked at.

I haven't had a response, unfortunately, from the minister on this very important matter that I know he's just itching to get at, Speaker. I know he's going to get that response out to me quickly, especially since maybe it would be my addition to this bill that had all of this various input.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Maybe in 22 sessional days.

Miss Monique Taylor: Maybe.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving has reported that only 1.9% of the total impaired driving charges laid in Canada in 2012 were for drug impairment. They have called for the development of a roadside test, similar to a breathalyzer, to identify drugged drivers. I think that's a major concern, Speaker.

I understand that the government is looking into technology that might be available for such a test, and I encourage them to follow through on that work. I think it is a very vital, important piece that really nobody has been able to pinpoint, because I believe that when some of those things went to court, there really wasn't the opportunity to prove what was happening.

Another part of this bill is on private delegated administrative authority with a relationship to government, similar to that of Tarion for new homeowners. So something along that theme, like the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, would be a way for them governing and policing motor vehicles.

I have a problem with that. I think that would definitely—are you cutting me off, Speaker? I see you jumping. Speaker, at 9:30—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm not cutting you off.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the members for their participation in the debates this afternoon and this evening. However, it is 9:30 of the clock. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
		Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Sudbury	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
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Soo Wong
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
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Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
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la justice**

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Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadi
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
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Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
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Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
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